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SOCIAL SERVICE REVIEW

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Avoiding Linguistic Neglect of Deaf Children

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ABSTRACT Deaf children who are not provided with a sign language early in their development are at risk of linguistic deprivation; they may never be fluent in any language, and they may have deficits in cognitive activities that rely on a firm foundation in a first language. These children are socially and emotionally isolated. Deafness makes a child vulnerable to abuse, and linguistic deprivation compounds the abuse because the child is less able to report it. Parents rely on professionals as guides in making responsible choices in raising and educating their deaf children. But lack of expertise on language acquisition and overreliance on access to speech often result in professionals not recommending that the child be taught a sign language or, worse, that the child be denied sign language. We recommend action that those in the social welfare services can implement immediately to help protect the health of deaf children.

INTRODUCTION

Deaf children (a label used inclusively here to cover children with a wide range of hearing loss, including those who are hard of hearing) have historically been and continue to be at increased risk for maltreatment. While many types of maltreatment of deaf children are documented and actively discussed, the majority of people who live and/or work with deaf children have yet to recognize the most prevalent type: linguistic deprivation (also known as language deprivation) due to failure to provide access and effective exposure to a language. New research shows that inadequate access to language is associated with negative health and psychological outcomes. The lack of recognition of this type of maltreatment is significant, since linguistic deprivation results in other types of maltreatment. In this way, then, failure to provide exposure to an accessible language constitutes child neglect. The critical means of avoiding this risk for a deaf child is providing the child with exposure to a sign language.

The issue of how to raise and educate deaf children is not a new one, and it has been fraught with debates that largely concern matters of culture and parental rights—debates grounded in philosophical, political, and sociological concepts. We do not enter into those debates. Instead, we focus on recent studies of biological harm and its psychosocial effects if a child does not fully access language during the period in which the brain's plasticity is primed for language development.

Not all deaf children who are not taught a sign language wind up with linguistic deprivation and become targets of abuse. Just as not all children who are not wearing a seat belt wind up in an accident and are the victim of injury or death, we agree, as a society, that children (and adults) should wear seat belts to guard against potential harm, and we expect the responsible adults to ensure the child's use of a seat belt. We conclude in this article that sign language exposure is just as critical an aspect of caring for the deaf child.

Examining the ways in which linguistic deprivation occurs helps to clarify the responsibilities of individuals and institutions to ensure the safety and humane care of deaf children. We discuss here the social and cultural conditions that restrict deaf children's access to language, including beliefs and practices of individuals and institutions that hinder parents' ability to protect their deaf children from harm. We also discuss

the need for all deaf children to learn a sign language. We end with suggestions for policies and practices that can assure protection from harm due to linguistic deprivation.

WELL-RECOGNIZED MALTREATMENT: A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Considerable recent research documents the prevalence of child maltreatment among deaf people. Lindsay Schenkel and colleagues (2014) used the English version of the Childhood Trauma Questionnaire to assess five types of childhood maltreatment that occurred prior to age 16. The self-reported child maltreatment occurrence for the deaf college sample in the United States ($n = 104$) is as follows: 48 percent for emotional abuse, 44 percent for emotional neglect, 44 percent for physical neglect, 40 percent for physical abuse, and 31 percent for sexual abuse. A study in the United Kingdom finds that children with speech and language disorders were at increased risk of emotional and physical abuse, associated both with psychological disorders and with neglect (Spencer et al. 2005). A Norwegian study finds that deaf females run double the risk of sexual abuse as their hearing peers, while deaf males run triple the risk (Kvam 2004), and a German prevalence survey study indicates that 52 percent of deaf women are at high risk for violence, including sexual abuse (BMFSFJ 2012). In an older American study, 54 percent of deaf boys and 50 percent of deaf girls reported sexual abuse (Sullivan, McCay, and Scanlan 1987).

Deaf people's high susceptibility to maltreatment of many sorts (Knutson and Sullivan 1993) is part of a larger trend. The second National Incidence Study (NIS-2), compiled in 1986 and published in 1988 (NIS-2 1998), shows that children with disabilities ran nearly double the risk of maltreatment as children without disabilities (although in the case of physical maltreatment, it can be unclear whether the correlation reflects on disability as a precursor or a result of maltreatment; Kolko 2002). Other studies confirm that the presence of a disability puts a child at higher risk of maltreatment (Brown et al. 1998), including neglect (Connell-Carrick 2003). While the prevalence of self-reported childhood abuse and neglect varies depending on methodological issues, with the result that prevalence is recorded as much higher in some countries than in others (Stoltenborgh et al. 2011), it is a global problem, one that is consis-

tently exacerbated among children with disabilities (Kendall-Tackett et al. 2005).

It is important to outline what we mean when we talk about neglect, since the definition and determination is neither simple nor straightforward, although certain situations are generally understood to constitute negligence. Susan Sullivan (2000, 8) lists neglect as “failure to provide basic physical health care, supervision, nutrition, personal hygiene, emotional nurturing, education, or safe housing. It also includes child abandonment or expulsion.” The failure to provide emotional nurturing—that is, emotional neglect—is highly pertinent to the deaf child and should be understood as involving broad conceptual parameters, including parental failure to recognize the child’s need for self-esteem (Hegar and Yungman 1989) and for encouragement (Barnett, Miller-Perrin, and Perrin 1997). James Garbarino, Edna Guttman, and Janis Seeley (1986) define five subtypes of psychological maltreatment: spurning, terrorizing, isolating, exploiting/corrupting, and denying emotional responsiveness.

Emotional harm is less obvious to detect and more difficult to document than physical and sexual harms, which leave visible marks; nevertheless, it is at least as damaging (Erickson and Egeland 2011). Neglect is a chronic stressor, and if not addressed early, it can lead to abnormal activation of neurobiological stress system responses that are associated with worse cognitive and psychological outcomes (Gunnar and Quevedo 2007; Bernard, Lind, and Dozier 2014).

While all types of maltreatment risk cognitive harm (Gauthier et al. 1996; Glaser 2000; Schore 2001; Norman et al. 2012; Spratt et al. 2012), in a brain imaging study of children who were admitted for psychiatric evaluation (some with a history of neglect/abuse and some without), neglect is found to have the most variability in the reduction of the corpus callosum compared to abuse (Teicher et al. 2004). Abnormal development of the corpus callosum is associated with dysfunctions in cognitive processing, including language processing (Hinkley et al. 2012). Ross Vanderwert and colleagues (2010) show that the effects of neglect are biological by establishing a sensitive period for brain plasticity regarding neglect; in an electroencephalogram study of children who were exposed to severe psychosocial neglect as infants in institutions and then placed in foster care intervention, results indicate that the desirable increase in brain activity associated with a sensitive period occurred only for neglected children who were placed in foster care prior to 2 years of age.

We note further that neglect and abuse are intensified by isolation (Zebell and Peterson 2003). Isolation can be considered a form of abuse, which brings us to the issue of linguistic neglect.

LINGUISTIC NEGLECT

In the general literature, early life stressors, including those involving social rejection and neglect, are linked to depression (Slavich and Irwin 2014) and greater emotional sensitivity to stress (Dougherty, Klein, and Davila 2004; McLaughlin et al. 2010). The influence of neglect is likely to be significantly higher for deaf children, who have reduced access to language, are often isolated socially, and are already at risk for worse psychological and cognitive development that can affect academic disparity. Research on deaf youth ages 11–18 documents that self-perception of poor access to language and communication is significantly associated with higher depressive symptomatology (Kushalnagar et al. 2011). Also, there is evidence of greater depression severity in deaf adult patients who retrospectively reported feeling left out from family communication during childhood compared to deaf adult patients who had better communication with their parents (Leigh and Anthony 1999).

Difficulties with communication at home are repeatedly listed as one of the risk factors for depression disorders among deaf children (Fellinger et al. 2009). More recently, a study of 143 deaf college students finds that difficulties in basic communication with parents significantly increase the odds of depression symptomatology during adulthood (Kushalnagar et al. 2016). The higher odds ratio may be partly due to the invisible emotional neglect that deaf children experience, which is not documented or reported until much later, after the individual seeks psychological treatment.

Isolating a child and denying emotional responsiveness to a child go hand-in-hand with not maintaining an environment for the child to build a solid foundation in a language. All children need regular and frequent exposure to an accessible language during the critical (or sensitive) period between birth and 3 or 4 years old (Mayberry, del Giudice, and Lieberman 2011) or they risk linguistic deprivation—a biological state that interferes with the development of neurolinguistic structures in the brain (Skotara et al. 2012; see also Leybaert and D’Hondt 2003; Lyness et al. 2013) and that appears to decrease gray matter in certain parts of the brain (Penicaud et al. 2013). Linguistic deprivation inhibits fluency in any lan-

guage and correlates with a range of poor cognitive and academic outcomes (Wolkomir 1992; Humphries et al. 2012). The more famous examples of linguistic deprivation, such as Jan Itard's "wild child" (Malson and Itard 1972), "Genie" (Fromkin et al. 1974), and others (Nelson, Zeanah, and Fox 2007), have captured the interest of those seeking to document the effects of linguistic deprivation on humans. However, many less sensational cases exist, where early lack of ordinary care is associated with cognitive deficits, particularly language deficits (Schaller 2012; Spratt et al. 2012). Early and prolonged lack of human language interaction has been shown to produce severe disorders that are unlikely to be reversible (Kumar et al. 2013). Deficiencies of appropriate input at critical points in development are more likely to cause harm to a child's cognitive development, and, therefore, relate directly to the determination of neglect (Sullivan 2000).

Many deaf children who are raised using only spoken language do not receive enough access to auditory information to develop language. Some cases fall near the extreme end of the spectrum of disorders or harms in that these children do not become entirely fluent in any language and have cognitive deficits associated with those faculties that require a firm foundation in a first language (Mayberry 2002). As early as 1993, Mather and Mitchell (1993, 120) introduced the term "communication abuse" to describe the failure to provide deaf children with "full access to communication." Severe language deprivation can be considered its own mental health disorder, the language deprivation syndrome (Gulati 2003, 2014; Glickman 2009b; Hall, Levin, and Anderson 2016). We argue that not protecting children against this syndrome is severe neglect.

On top of these biological harms, the notion of social communication has emerged over the last few decades as a way to group together a range of concepts related to language deprivation, with much of the discussion revolving around children with autism (McEvoy, Rogers, and Pennington 1993; Mundy and Crowson 1997; Wetherby et al. 2007; among many), but it is applicable to any child who is deprived full access to language, including deaf children (Peterson and Siegal 2000; Astington and Baird 2005; Peterson, Wellman, and Liu 2005, among many). Without full access to language, the child's privilege of social communication is taken away, which has severe consequences. Lack of social communication inhibits development of a healthy, strong sense of self (Breivik 2005; Hintermair 2008; among many), inhibits developing resiliency in order to deal with adver-

sity, so it impedes executive function (Figueras, Edwards, and Langdon 2008; Hauser, Lukomski, and Hillman 2008; among many), and makes it hard for children to get along with and have empathy for others, which impedes the development of a theory of mind (Woolfe, Want, and Siegal 2002; Hughes and Leekam 2004; Schick et al. 2007; among many). That is, the children will have trouble understanding that others have their own mental states and do not simply have the same beliefs, needs, desires, intentions, and perspectives that they have. The child without social communication does not have the chance to develop these social and cognitive skills, which are prerequisites for education and for assuming a productive and satisfying position in society. Thus, we consider not protecting a child's social communication to be severe neglect. Additionally, anyone left without social communication is left without health communication, another instance of neglect.

In deaf children with no language delays (meaning deaf children who sign from an early age), the architecture of the brain is protected and social communication is strong. These children have been found not to have an issue with sustained attention, which is an important cognitive skill for being able to function in an educational setting (Dye and Hauser 2014), and this is one reason why signing deaf children do better academically than nonsigning ones (as outlined in the following section on sources of linguistic neglect).

What makes a language accessible to a child? If a child is exposed regularly and frequently to a language and picks up that language naturally without explicit training and exercise (as generally happens with hearing children in a speech environment and with deaf children in a signing environment), the language qualifies as accessible to that child. On the other hand, if a child is exposed regularly and frequently to a language but does not pick it up even after explicit training and exercise (as can happen with deaf children in a speech environment), the language is arguably inaccessible to that child. Between those two ends lies a gray area in which decisions by caregivers and professionals have as much bearing on the lack of access as the fact of the hearing loss. Just as hearing loss can affect access to spoken language, which is a biological constraint on language exposure, so decisions to exclude exposure to sign language can affect access to language, which can lead to social constraint.

It is important to note that sign languages are accessible to all deaf children (including deaf-blind children, given that there are tactile variations

of sign languages). That is why a recent panel of experts reporting in *Pediatrics* concludes that providing a sign language as early as possible is the more reliable way to ensure a deaf child's language development and prevent linguistic deprivation (Napoli et al. 2015). Providing deaf children with a sign language also combats the isolation that characterizes much of the neglect reported in the literature. The harm of failing to assure language development is compounded by the fact that this particular neglect increases deaf children's risk for other maltreatments (Mather and Mitchell 1993; Embry 2000; Sullivan and Knutson 2000) and decreases their ability to report these maltreatments (Johnson 2011).

SOURCES OF LINGUISTIC NEGLECT

If failing to provide a sign language to a deaf child risks linguistic deprivation and therefore, like not requiring a child to wear a seatbelt, constitutes neglect, one may wonder why families and those giving professional advice to them decide to take this risk, given that parents have a natural desire to protect their children and that professionals who work with deaf children and their families are committed to their welfare. The answer lies in historical views about language acquisition and sign languages that have resisted change despite new research requiring social attitude change about sign language and updated informed practice by professionals. This resistance has led many to delay acceptance that deprivation is occurring. In their work on the sexual abuse of deaf children, Cindy Cassady and colleagues (2005, 4) say, "They [deaf children] may have been surrounded by rich language input, but were unable to access it; often unbeknownst to their caregivers, but sometimes because caregivers are aware but in denial and do not address the need for their children to learn communication skills." Here, we explore the issues of social attitudes and lack of information among professionals, and we show how the combination of the two can lead to denial.

Language development, a critical part of overall cognitive development, is under most circumstances a naturally acquired artifact of human interaction. As outlined earlier, when human language interaction is withheld or absent, the result is severe cognitive deficits. Although social services typically intervene when abuse is detected (Iwaniec 2006; Jenny 2010), it is rare for adult caregivers of these children to be held liable for these harms, which creates handicaps. In fact, the idea that caregivers

can create handicaps in their children through neglect is generally discussed with respect to unborn fetuses (such as in Parness 1982; Scott 2002), not small children. It is assumed that it is sufficient to employ treatments, therapies, and interventions long established by the hearing sciences with deaf children. If the deaf child has deficits, it is assumed that these are due to the condition of deafness rather than to the lack of action on the part of caregivers. Even in the most extreme cases, public policy does not consider the fact that these harms are preventable or avoidable and does not hold anyone responsible for avoiding them.

One historical misconception behind this thinking is that language is taken as equivalent to speech. This assumption is outdated and comes with severe consequences. Language is a cognitive faculty that can be manifested in more than one modality: oral-aural, realized as speech, and manual-visual, realized as sign. The two modalities are equal cognitive citizens, so to speak; language development is modality-independent and people can express themselves fully in either modality. Evidence supporting this comes from research in many areas, including linguistic analysis (Padden 1988, among many), first language acquisition (Chamberlain, Morford, and Mayberry 2000, among many), neurology in matters of language pathologies (Campbell, MacSweeney, and Waters 2008, among many), and language processing (Emmorey 2002, among many), as well as expressive capacity (Bauman et al. 2006, among many). To be cognitively and psychosocially healthy, children need language, regardless of its modality. For deaf children, visual language—that is, a sign language—satisfies that need naturally.

Despite the preponderance of relevant scientific evidence supporting the equivalence of sign language and speech, the status of sign languages as bona fide languages has not been understood by medical professionals (Humphries et al. 2014) and society at large. The reasons for this may be multiple, including the desire to make deaf children as “normal” as possible, thus sidestepping the potentially stigma-carrying use of a sign language (Lane 2005, among many). Another factor may be the desire to avoid work that seems impossible; families would need to learn to sign in order to raise their deaf children with a sign language, and that task appears daunting to many. Whatever its source, this misunderstanding makes it difficult to fully realize the long-lasting effect of language deficits and other ensuing cognitive deficits on deaf children. As a result, underinformed child-welfare and educational-policy perspectives enable behaviors that contribute to

deaf children's language and cognitive deficits, which in turn contribute to subsequent maltreatments.

Research over the past several decades reveals that full and prolonged exposure to a sign language for a deaf (or hearing) child results in language development that follows the same patterns and produces the same developmental results as exposure to a spoken language does for a hearing child (Courtin 2000; Woolfe et al. 2002; Mayberry et al. 2011; among many). The research suggests that sign languages are exactly what the deaf child needs for good cognitive development across the board, including good social communication, as noted earlier. Deaf children need to have their visual attention captured in order to learn best (Dye, Hauser, and Bavelier 2008). To withhold a sign language from deaf children and to instead invest hope in their acquiring a spoken language is to miss a natural pathway to cognitive development, and it constitutes a risk not justified by historical patterns of development in deaf children. Deaf children who acquire a sign language from birth do not risk language delay or deficit, their reading abilities are better than deaf children from other backgrounds (Goldin-Meadow and Mayberry 2001; Moores 2006; Chamberlain and Mayberry 2008; Holmer, Heimann, and Rudner 2016), and the spoken language skills of the children who have cochlear implants in this group are better than the spoken language skills of the children whose parents are hearing (Hassanzadeh 2012), a factor that opens up personal and professional opportunities. There is a strong correlation between better signing skills and better print literacy in study after study (most recently, Hrastinski and Wilbur [2016], and see the earlier work of Lederberg, Schick, and Spencer [2013]). With continued means of direct communication appropriate to the individual (sign, speech, or writing) and with appropriate accommodations such as amplifications, frequency modulation (FM) systems, captioning, or interpreting services throughout schooling, deaf children can grow up to be productive adults in the workforce (Cawthon, Schoffstall, and Garberoglio 2014).

RESPONSIBILITY FOR LANGUAGE DEPRIVATION AND NEGLECT

Parents of deaf children do not make their decisions about how to raise their child in a vacuum. Typically, parents are selectively informed, at least initially (in the United States, around 96 percent of deaf children are born

to hearing parents; Mitchell and Karchmer 2004), and are more likely to be vulnerable as they are stressed by an unexpected situation for which they are unprepared (Koester and Meadow-Orlans 1990; Aras et al. 2014). It is natural that parents turn to the higher-status medical and hearing science professions for guidance.

These professions too often provide misinformation. Partly that is because medical schools have been remiss in not covering relevant information in their curricula (Humphries et al. 2014), and continuing medical education (CME) programs have not taken up the slack. In particular, most medical schools and CME programs do not teach about the biological foundation of language acquisition, the cognitive harm of linguistic deprivation, and the fact that sign languages satisfy cognitive needs just as well as spoken languages do. From social stigmatization and uninformed beliefs comes a bias among medical professionals against sign language. Since they are not kept abreast of the relevant scientific research, medical professionals have historically taken the view that deafness is a problem that needs to be “treated,” and some even say “cured” (Branson and Miller 2005); deafness does not conform to the norm, and deaf children are seen in a sense like apples that fall far from the tree (Solomon 2012). This lack of modern understanding about language, cognition, and sign language creates a gap that hearing science professionals and cochlear implant (CI) manufacturers fill with the offer of the treatment or cure needed for deafness via technology, a means that the medical profession is inclined to trust and that parents are willing to accept. The medical profession plus the CI manufacturers together then tend to promote a speech-only approach to the raising and educating of deaf children.

Some manufacturers and implant teams even ask parents to sign an agreement saying they will keep their deaf child away from a sign language (Knoors and Marschark 2014), despite evidence that many deaf children with CI receive no language benefit (Giraud and Lee 2007). In a survey of over 20,000 deaf children implanted since 2000, 47 percent had stopped using their CI (Watson and Gregory 2005), which is a strong indication that the children were not receiving significant benefit (although the children report many additional reasons, including facial twitching, post-surgery scarring, stigma from wearing the device, and pain from both the device and the auditory input). Both the medical profession and CI manufacturers are aware of the variable success rate with CIs and know that it is impossible to predict with accuracy which children will have suc-

cess—witness the large number of articles about training to use CIs in the medical literature.

A set of factors, including higher socioeconomic status of the family, implantation before the age of 12 months, motivation of the family to carry out the training required to use the CI, and several others (Svirsky, Theo, and Neuburger 2004; Santarelli et al. 2008; Szagun and Stumper 2012), has been found to positively correlate with CI success. However, even children who have all the positive correlates—the optimal cases—experience failure (Humphries et al. 2012), and most CI children are not optimal cases. In fact, poverty is implicated in higher levels of sensorineural deafness around the globe (for Canada, see Bowd 2005; for India, see Reddy et al. 2006; for Malawi, see van Hasselt and van Kreten 2002; for Pakistan, see Musani et al. 2011; for the United States, see many, especially Oghalai et al. 2002 and Prince et al. 2003). Further, families have little time for focusing on the training regimen that is required (Most and Zaidman-Zait 2001; Punch and Hyde 2010).

Once such a speech-only approach is promoted, public policy falls in line with what is argued to be standard acceptable medical practice. There is awareness and often documentation in child welfare services that language and other developmental delays of deaf children are culprits in a variety of maltreatments the children suffer, but they have not challenged medical or hearing professionals with regard to the speech-only approach. For example, Richard Embry and Frank Grossman (2007) report on what they deemed a successful community practice effort to deal with child abuse, particularly with respect to deaf children. This practice focused on linguistic access, as deaf people do better with clinicians who are culturally competent (Black and Glickman 2008; Glickman 2009a; Gournaris and Aubrecht 2013) and “who sign themselves and who use counseling techniques that resonate with deaf people” (Glickman 2013, 15). The use of signing in these counseling situations can create a strong bond, as well as ensure full communication (similar to what White [2001] reports for deaf children adopted by deaf parents). While this practice is commendable, the organization that Embry and Grossman described, the Los Angeles Child Abuse Councils, to this day does not list among their Prevention Tips on their website the recommendation that deaf children be taught a sign language so that they will not have a language deficit and, thus, be less vulnerable to abuse—this despite the fact that they acknowledge that language deficit is a culprit. It seems that even well-intentioned

child welfare practices stop short of making appropriate recommendations.

Given the state of the professions and their reluctance to acknowledge the issues, parents may be confused, especially since in some instances mandated reporters (physicians, nurses, social service providers, audiologists, and psychologists) might decide that implantation and avoidance of a sign language is in the best interest of the child, thus implicitly threatening the parents if they do not follow their advice (see discussion in Bender [2004], Zimmerman [2009], and Byrd et al. [2011]).

A large portion of the responsibility, then, lies with the professionals. Parents cannot be expected to be equipped to carry that responsibility fully, but the professionals have committed to that responsibility by virtue of their profession. If professionals are truly to protect and serve deaf children, they are obligated to understand and operationalize the cumulative evidence of the importance of sign language to deaf children's cognitive development.

ACTION

The responsibility to protect deaf children against linguistic neglect and the vulnerability to abuse that ensues falls on many: the medical profession, hearing science professionals, the CI industry, educators, and child welfare services. The last several years have witnessed considerable advocacy for remedial action among medical and hearing science professionals (including Kushalnagar et al. 2010; Humphries et al. 2012, 2014, 2016); however, no advocacy work we know of has been directed at child welfare services. This is a gap that needs to be remedied for two critical reasons. First, doctors (and other medical professionals) often do not follow the children's development after the initial consultations and thus are not positioned to know the consequences of their own advice, while child welfare services witness the consequences firsthand. Second, the potential for conflict of interest arises with medical professionals (kick-backs from CI companies are an example; see Department of Justice 2010), but no such potential for conflict of interest arises with child welfare agencies. Child welfare agencies are, therefore, strategically positioned to play a key role in addressing the problem of linguistic neglect.

We offer initial suggestions for encouraging positive effects that are based, in part, on comparison with how laws against corporal punish-

ment of children in several countries have come about and their positive effects.

COMPARISON TO ANTI-CORPORAL PUNISHMENT LAWS

Whether or not a parent is justified in punishing a child with a spanking or other corporal violence has been a topic of controversy for the past few decades, and the controversy is complicated by the fact that the practice has been part of family traditions at a personal, ethnic, and even national level in many places. The issue of corporal punishment offers a useful comparison to the issue of a speech-only approach to the raising of deaf children precisely because it is controversial and the controversy involves what parents may see as their rights in raising their children within their culture, and because the intent on the part of the parents is not harm (Durrant 2006) yet there are significant potential harms, both physical and psychosocial. Further, the comparison allows for a useful practical model for what child welfare services can do.

As recently as 1992, a survey in the state of Ohio finds that 59 percent of pediatricians and 70 percent of family physicians supported mild spanking in some disciplinary situations (McCormick 1992). Since then, three forces have brought about a significant change in the attitudes of professionals in North America, turning them against corporal punishment: recognition of children's rights, advances in pediatric psychology, and greater understanding of the dynamics of parental violence (Durrant 2008). In particular, research shows that physical punishment is positively correlated with negative developmental outcomes, including aggression and antisocial behavior (see Gershoff 2002; Aucoin, Frick, and Bodin 2006) and depression and suicide (see DuRant et al. 1994; Turner and Finkelhor 1996), regardless of the cultural group a family belongs to and regardless of the fact that the intent in most cases is to punish or teach, not to harm (for an overview, see [Durrant 2008]). Research also shows that parental factors, such as stress (Travillion and Snyver 1993) and socioeconomic status (Straus 1991), correlate with increased corporal punishment. Just 6 years after the Ohio survey, the American Academy of Pediatrics recommended against spanking (American Academy of Pediatrics Committee on Psychosocial Aspects of Child and Family Health 1998).

In some countries, institutions outside the medical profession have taken a lead in opposing corporal punishment. In 2004, for example, the

Canadian Psychological Association issued this policy statement (Canadian Psychological Association 2004, online):

Physical punishment has been consistently demonstrated to be an ineffective and potentially harmful method of managing children's behaviour. It places children at risk of physical injury and may interfere with psychological adjustment. To reduce the prevalence of physical punishment of children and youth, public awareness campaigns must deliver a clear message that physical punishment may place children at risk of physical and psychological harm. Second, public education strategies that increase Canadians' knowledge of child development should be supported. Third, evidence based programs for developing parenting skills should be supported.

Many other Canadian organizations have joined in the campaign (Durrant 2008).¹ Of particular importance here, the Child Welfare League of Canada (CWLC) is working with the Public Health Agency of Canada to examine family violence with the goal of supplementing policy, programming, and future research, as well as working with the Family Violence Initiative of the Department of Justice on prevention efforts and priorities at the national level (CWLC 2013).

Many countries have passed laws banning corporal punishment with children, Sweden being the first (in 1979), with 17 other European nations following over the next 30 years (Bussman, Erthal, and Schroth 2011).² Other countries have declared physical punishment of children illegal, though not via the establishment of a specific law (such as Italy, with a highest court ruling; Durrant 2000). The movement is global in scope (Durrant 2008).

1. These include Canadian Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, Canadian Association of Child Life Leaders, Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists, Canadian Association of Paediatric Health Centres, Canadian Dental Association, Canadian Institute of Child Health, Canadian Nurses Association, Canadian Paediatric Society, Canadian Physiotherapy Association, Canadian Psychological Association, Canadian Public Health Association, Canadian Red Cross, and the College of Family Physicians of Canada.

2. These include Finland (1983), Norway (1987), Austria (1989), Cyprus (1994), Denmark (1997), Latvia (1998), Croatia (1999), Germany (2000), Iceland (2003), Bulgaria (2003), Ukraine (2004), Rumania (2005), Hungary (2005), Greece (2006), the Netherlands (2007), Portugal (2007), and Spain (2007).

Sweden seems to be the country most studied with respect to the banning of corporal punishment, so we report on those studies here. One of the goals of the law in Sweden was to shift parental attitudes (Sverne 1993); although violence against children had been illegal for decades, many children were still being injured as “discipline,” and parents needed to be educated that this amounted to abuse (Durrant and Olsen 1997); hence, the passing of a specific law. Large-scale public awareness campaigns resulted in over 90 percent of the Swedish population being familiar with the law a year after it was introduced (Zieger 1983). Parental attitude has changed; Swedish parents now engage much less frequently in corporal punishment (Edfeldt 1996; Janson 2005), and, though on occasion they might “err and strike their children,” they view these as lapses in good parenting (Durrant 2011, 381). Organizations such as Save the Children Sweden (<http://resourcecentre.savethechildren.se/publishers/save-children-sweden>) support the law by keeping up efforts at informing and educating parents and children; in Germany, by contrast, the law banning corporal punishment was publicized, but not as intensively and continuously as in Sweden, and a much lower percentage of the population is aware of it (Bussmann 2005). In a study comparing five countries with laws banning corporal punishment, many indicators point to Sweden as having the lowest incidence of such family violence (Bussmann et al. 2011). Evidently, a combination of public education with law reform is a more effective strategy than either alone (Durrant and Ensom 2012).

Most important, since the 1979 law, the negative outcomes at least partially attributed to corporal punishment have been reduced in Sweden, including rates of youth suicide and alcohol and drug use (Durrant 2000). Additionally, youth involvement in crimes (theft, narcotics trafficking, rape, homicide, and other assaults) has declined substantially (Durrant 2000), suggesting that the law is doing the job it was intended to do.

In looking at the example of efforts against corporeal punishment of children, we see several strategies for changing social attitudes and professional practices. One such practice, which has already begun, is greatly increasing social awareness of sign languages and the benefits of visual access to language for deaf children. Increasing training and awareness of language acquisition in two modalities, aural and visual, also needs to be a priority in the social services and in medical professions. Policies and codes of practice need to be reviewed, written, and practiced in child services. Existing laws may need to be tweaked, and new laws may need to be

passed. Advocacy by institutions and associations, as well as by consumer and public support groups, is needed to spur and bolster interest and a sense of responsibility from professionals and their organizations. Although the controversy about corporeal punishment may still exist, social and cultural pressure coupled with research indicates that an alternative path is better for children. The situation of language development for deaf children is even stronger: regardless of one's stance on the place of sign language in deaf children's lives, to continue to exclude it is a significant risk, while including it poses no risk at all.

CHANGE IN PRACTICE

Child Protective Service (CPS) agencies respond to reports of child neglect, limiting the targets of their interventions to the particular caregivers in a given situation. CPS agencies have no direct responsibility for changing the behavior of other individuals or institutions that may contribute to parents' failure to protect their children. Yet, in the case of deaf children, those other professionals and institutions with zero tolerance for alternative approaches to speech contribute to parents' failure to provide their children with sign language. We, therefore, recommend a fundamental change in the involvement of CPS with the health of deaf children: CPS agencies need to assume an active role in recognizing the problem, defining responsibility, assigning accountability, laying out what needs to be done, and educating the public.

The crucial first step is explicit recognition by child welfare and social service communities of the chronic and widespread problem among deaf children and their families with regard to the linguistic development of the children. Child welfare and social services communities need to document the problem and publicize their findings in publications and websites directed at expectant parents, parents, medical professionals, and educators of small children. Again, as the law banning corporal punishment in Sweden shows us, educating the public plays a major role in changing attitudes and behavior.

The second step toward change is for professionals to inform themselves more deeply about sign languages, the benefits of bilingual and bimodal language acquisition, and the need for both sign and spoken/print language exposure as the deaf child progresses in early childhood, in the educational system, and throughout his or her life. This information should

help to explicitly identify that the locus of delay in language acquisition is due to insufficient exposure to accessible language for the child. The basis for a new standard of care then becomes clear: early and well-informed advice to parents of deaf children by all professionals that exposure to sign language is the most effective way to protect their child's cognitive and psychosocial health.

Child welfare and social service communities are in a position to take this step immediately if they share their own awareness of this problem and its remedies. When they publicize their own documentation of linguistic deprivation, they can conclude with recommendations for all involved in the health, raising, and educating of deaf children.

In this way, child welfare services can support parents in their desire to maximize their children's chances of healthy cognitive and psychosocial development. By giving public information, they can reduce parents' confusion and sense of powerlessness and help them adopt behaviors that will build their parental confidence and that protect their children's health.

Documentation of the sort recommended here will go a long way toward changing public attitude. Even before that documentation is done, it is important to recognize that neglect is happening at the time of writing. Therefore, we believe that a health emergency exists for deaf children who are not receiving adequate exposure to language for timely cognitive development. While education of the public would be very helpful in the long term, immediate action should be taken based on the preponderance of evidence already available from research in psychology and linguistics. States' child welfare statutes, in particular those involving abuse and neglect, need to be reviewed now and should be amended or added to in order to recognize linguistic neglect as a harm to deaf children.

While we argue that not providing a deaf child with exposure to a sign language constitutes maltreatment, professionals' pervasive lack of information about language acquisition and the historical prejudice against sign languages are so extreme that it would be advisable to add language explicitly stating that not providing a deaf child with a sign language can constitute child neglect to existing statutes. This would alert medical and other professionals to reconsider the advice that they presently give to families. A wide range of helping professionals, and not just mandated reporters, might be inclined to report to CPS cases of deaf children who are suffering from language deprivation. Early detection and contact with the parents who most need help in the form of information and sugges-

tions for behavior are critical in early years of the child's development. Every month that is lost further worsens the effects of deprivation.

Although child welfare services should not shoulder the responsibility of protecting deaf children alone, there are certain strategies that would kick-start the social action that is needed to deal with this urgent problem. A starting point would be for child welfare personnel to become informed themselves so that they can better inform others. Institutions that offer undergraduate- and/or graduate-level degrees in social welfare, as well as continuing education credit programs for social workers, should include and highlight information about language acquisition and the need for sign language acquisition among deaf children. Child welfare services can then produce policies, guidelines, procedures, and materials that inform families and other responsible professionals about the potential and the reality of language deprivation in deaf and hard-of-hearing children. Professionals need to strengthen policies and regulations to empower action related to language neglect and need to encourage reporting and intervention as early as possible when harm is done to prevent further harm, since the developmental process is time sensitive.

One of the purposes of this article is to initiate necessary professional development of social service providers and of anyone involved in the Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EDHI) Program. As a start, the web-based informational brochure on "hearing loss" issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC 2015) and similar agencies in other countries should be revamped to reflect the urgency and severity of language neglect.

For our part, we offer a place to start. Social service providers can point all families of deaf children who are referred to them to the option grid "Deafness in Infancy and Childhood: Language Options" (<http://patient.info/decision-aids/deafness-in-infancy-and-childhood-language-options>). Additionally, suggestions on how to advise families can be found in the recent *Clinical Pediatrics* article by Tom Humphries and colleagues (2016).

CONCLUSION

All deaf children should be enabled to acquire a sign language through early, frequent, and regular exposure; failure to do so greatly increases the risk of cognitive harm and thus constitutes neglect. Professionals working with deaf children have the responsibility to keep abreast of

scientific findings and modify their recommendations about the raising and educating of deaf children accordingly, rather than perpetuate practices that do harm to a class of children—deaf children. Because acquiring sign language does no harm and carries no risk, it is much safer for deaf children to have early and sustained exposure to it than the alternative of a speech-only approach, which carries a strong risk of inadequate exposure to language. Professionals who work with families of deaf children are responsible advisors when they strive to ensure that deaf children are continually exposed to a sign language.

An established principle in society, the right to language, is becoming more applicable to deaf children and their right to intact and natural language. Sign language ensures this right because of its accessible nature. Deaf children have a legal right to language (Humphries et al. 2013), and they have a right to grow up bilingually, using a sign language and a spoken language (often in the written form of that language; Grosjean 2001).

We close with this reminder (for elaboration, see Humphries et al. [2013]): following the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education (UNESCO 1994) and following the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Article 24.3(b) and Article 24.4 (CRPD 2006), professionals, including physicians, hearing science specialists, advocates and participants in the cochlear implant industry, and those in child welfare services should ensure that a sign language not be seen as a competitive option but as an inclusive option. Better still, it should not be seen as an option at all but as an urgent remedy to the problem of language neglect.

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When the Clients Can Choose: Dilemmas of Street-Level Workers in Choice-Based Social Services

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ABSTRACT How does the increased use of choice-based management strategies in social services influence the behavior of street-level workers? In this article, we provide an analytical framework for understanding street-level logic in choice-based environments. We then turn to the case of home-nursing care in Israel to examine how choice plays out in street-level workers' day-to-day practices. By relying on 34 interviews with social workers working in home-care agencies, we illustrate how street-level workers' jobs have expanded beyond implementing public policy to include the "new job" of recruiting and retaining clients. The article shows how a choice-based environment gives higher priority to clients' preferences, while at the same time these preferences are subordinated to the economic interest of the providers. It also demonstrates how market pressures may push street-level workers to develop new practices and coping strategies that go beyond, but often also counter to, formal policy.

INTRODUCTION

The environment of street-level workers has undergone far-reaching changes over the past three decades (Lipsky [1980] 2010; Brodtkin 2007, 2011). Under the influence of New Public Management (NPM) reforms, which have focused on improving the efficiency of public services by adopting private-sector management methods, this environment has shifted from specialized bureaucracies to a new world characterized by privatized delivery of services, performance measurement, and choice-

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based services (Handler 1996; Diller 2000; Pollitt and Bouckaert 2011; Cohen 2016a).

Under these new arrangements, street-level workers are still expected to deliver public policy as designed by the policy makers, but service delivery is profoundly different from the traditional bureaucratic model: the commitment to the policy is through contracts rather than bureaucratic rules, results-oriented performance evaluations are often much more dominant, the direct employer is usually no longer the state, the workers are usually not unionized, and the working environment is held to be much more competitive, with competitive tendering systems or choice-based structures allowing clients to choose their provider. Yet most of the street-level literature remains focused on street-level workers in traditional bureaucratic settings (notable exceptions are Dias and Maynard-Moody [2007] and Brodtkin [2011]). Furthermore, the scarce literature on street-level workers under NPM usually looks at street-level workers in contracted-out and performance-based arrangements, overlooking the consequences of choice-based strategies on street-level work.

In an effort to fill this gap, this study explores how client choice plays out in the new institutional arrangement of public services from a street-level perspective. It asks how and why a choice-based service environment influences street-level workers' practices in the context of marketized social services. These questions are timely. In recent years, we have witnessed what we may describe as a choice revolution (Blomqvist 2004), with choice-based strategies of service delivery increasingly used in public services in Europe (Greve 2011), including Sweden and Denmark (Blomqvist 2004), and the United States (see, e.g., Savas 2000; Kirby and Burwick 2007), particularly if we include primary and secondary education, where vouchers and other choice-based approaches have expanded rapidly (Loeb, Valant, and Kasman 2011). Empirically, the article examines this question through a detailed case study of choice-based home-nursing-care services in Israel delivered by private for-profit and nonprofit nursing agencies (Ajzenstadt and Rosenhek 2000; Schmid 2003). This is based on qualitative analysis of primary and secondary resources, as well as 34 interviews with social workers employed by these private organizations on the front lines.

This study contributes to the understanding of street-level practices in these new management strategies by offering an analytical framework and making an empirical observation of street-level workers' interactions with

managers and clients under choice-based systems. Although it does not allow for a direct comparative analysis with workers operating in traditional bureaucratic settings, it sheds light on the still understudied area of street-level work in choice-based services. It demonstrates what we term the “new job” of street-level workers in such environments who, along with implementing policy, are now expected to recruit and retain clients. It illustrates how market pressures push street-level workers to develop new practices and coping strategies that sometimes go beyond, but sometimes run counter to, formal policy and professional guidelines and ethics.

This article begins with a review of the existing literature on street-level workers and then elaborates on the analytical framework for understanding their discretion in choice-based services. Next, it presents the case study, explains the methodology of the research, and gives the empirical findings. It concludes by discussing the implications of choice-based management on street-level workers and explaining how the changing power balance between street-level workers, managers, and clients gives greater importance to the private interests of the providers and the preferences of the clients in policy implementation.

THE CHANGING INSTITUTIONAL ENVIRONMENT OF STREET-LEVEL WORK

STREET-LEVEL WORKERS UNDER THE “OLD” BUREAUCRATIC SETTINGS

Michael Lipsky’s ([1980] 2010) seminal work *Street-Level Bureaucracy: Dilemmas of the Individual in Public Service* coins the phrase “street-level bureaucrats” to describe the central role frontline workers in public bureaucracies take in determining how public policy actually plays out. By observing the complex interactions between citizens and public agency workers, Lipsky notes that street-level workers use their discretion to cope with the uncertainties and pressures of their work, developing systematic but informal routines of practice to deal with limited resources and daunting tasks. Their informal implementation practices, located in the interface between government and citizens, directly influence the lives and fates of many individuals (Lipsky [1980] 2010).

Lipsky’s work theory on street-level bureaucracy triggered vast scholarly work extending across fields and disciplines, including public policy and public management studies (Brodkin 2012; see also Hill and Hupe

2014). There is now a fairly substantial base of empirical evidence of the factors shaping street-level practice in bureaucratic settings. The evidence indicates that inadequate resources, along with values, social networks, type of profession, amount of workload, culture, and degree of discretion, are important factors in decision-making processes (see, e.g., Bovens and Zouridis 2002; Riccucci et al. 2004; Keiser 2010; Tummers et al. 2015; Cohen 2016b). This body of research not only shows that these factors matter; more importantly, it shows how they matter in street-level workers' interactions with managers and clients.

As to relations with managers, the literature identifies instances in which street-level workers use their discretion to resist or circumvent policies and managerial pressures (Evans 2010; Brodtkin 2012); it further suggests that such policy divergences may eventually lead to changes in the policy itself (Gofen 2014). Lipsky attributes much of this autonomy of street-level workers in public bureaucracies to strong labor agreements that constrain managers' abilities to dismiss workers or to manipulate benefits and sanctions to better control their behavior (Lipsky [1980] 2010). Although Lipsky emphasizes that public managers still have ways to control their workers, these organizational conditions clearly weaken their power.

As for the relations of street-level workers with their clients, scholars have highlighted the power advantage street-level workers have over their clients. By and large, they conclude that clients have a very limited capacity to enforce accountability on street-level workers (Brodtkin 2009). For instance, in the context of public welfare agencies, studies have shown that street-level caseworkers may use their discretion to deny, defer, and disregard the claims and needs of their clients, thereby limiting their access to benefits and to redress mechanisms (Lens 2005, 2013; Brodtkin 2009). Although Lipsky recognizes that clients have some power and use various strategies in interacting with street-level workers ([1980] 2010), these relations are not balanced. Interestingly, he attributes much of these unequal relations to the fact that the clients of public services, for the most part, cannot choose the provider and "street-level bureaucracies usually have nothing to lose by failing to satisfy clients" ([1980] 2010, 56).

Nevertheless, Steven Maynard-Moody and Michael Musheno (2000, 2003) argue that street-level workers will more often use their discretion in order to be responsive to clients, even if they need to bend or break the rules (drawing on their identity as "citizen agents"), than act as strict enforcers of the state policy rules (as "state agents"). But these researchers

emphasize that street-level workers will go beyond what is required to help those clients they deem worthy and will provide minimal assistance when they deem clients unworthy according to their moral judgment.

STREET-LEVEL WORKERS UNDER NEW PUBLIC MANAGEMENT

Over the past three decades, NPM reforms have radically altered street-level workers' work environment, introducing market-like mechanisms into the implementation of public policy. Today policies in many countries around the world and in various fields are being delivered through non-governmental organizations (NGOs), for-profit firms, and mixed public-private arrangements operating in competitive and performance-oriented settings (see, e.g., Considine et al. 2015). Therefore, although street-level workers remain on the front lines of service delivery, in many cases they can no longer be considered merely bureaucrats (Hill and Hupe 2014).

Contracting out, which is the default approach in many areas, brings new street-level actors from the voluntary and the business sectors into policy implementation (Lipsky and Smith 1993; Brodtkin 2007; Dias and Maynard-Moody 2007). Contracting out is often done through competitive tender, with the providers competing for government contracts. The competitive process is intended to push the providers to offer better services at lower prices (Savas 2000). From the perspective of policy makers, contracting out is a way to engage private agents who are bound by contract to implement public policy. From a street-level perspective, this is a move from a dual to a triangular structure of service delivery. While, as Maynard-Moody and Musheno (2000) stress, street-level workers in the public sector struggle with their dual role as state agents and citizen agents, in the new structure, they are also committed to their private employers.

The evidence in the literature on the effects of this triangular commitment structure is limited, but there are indications that the private providers are strongly committed to implementing public policy as laid down by the government in the contract. Michael Lipsky and Steven Smith (1993), for example, observe that "in the conflict between public agencies and non-profit organizations in the character and allocation of services, government has gained the upper hand" (1993, 144). Similarly, Janice Johnson Dias and Steven Maynard-Moody (2007) find management strongly committed to its contract with the government in the context of for-profit welfare providers. Both Lipsky and Smith (1993) and Dias and Maynard-Moody (2007) em-

phasize the downside of this strong focus on control rather than on enabling street-level organizations. At the same time, they find that, by and large, the commitment of the private agencies is aligned with their contractual obligation to act as state agents.

NPM reforms also often adopt performance-based strategies of management. Performance management replaces public bureaucracies' premises of rule-based management, turning instead to approaches largely constructed around incentives and inducements (Brodkin 2007). Performance management can be targeted at organizations as well as at individual workers. Organizations are subjected to performance management when they operate in competitive quasi-markets or when the outcomes they are expected to realize are defined, measured, and evaluated with financial rewards for out-performers and financial penalties for underperformers (van Berkel and Knies 2016). Several studies have concluded that performance management is effective in steering workers' actions and priorities in the direction desired by the organization, thereby advancing policy implementation (see, e.g., Riccucci et al. 2004). However, more critical evaluations of performance management highlight potential adverse effects on street-level workers' practices. This literature suggests that performance management is likely to incentivize street-level workers to provide services that are expected to realize measured outcomes, while services considered unrelated to these outcomes are less likely to be provided (van Berkel and Knies 2016).

In a comprehensive study of the influence of the implementation of new managerialism in the context of a large public welfare bureaucracy, Evelyn Brodkin (2011) concludes that street-level workers used their discretion to produce "informal practices that are substantively different from—and more diverse than—what policymakers or managers tend to recognize" (253) and that street-level workers' priorities had shifted from focusing on client needs to focusing on measured performance targets. Brodkin finds that performance management stimulated street-level workers to realize quick wins by encouraging them to "make the numbers" (259) and to prioritize "speed over need" (266). Similarly, in a study of a contracted welfare-to-work agency, Dias and Maynard-Moody (2007) find what they call a performance paradox. In their study, while managers emphasized objectives that were financially rewarded by the contract (e.g., job placements), street-level workers adhered to the goal of providing individually tailored services for clients that the contract required but did not

reward. In addition, in the context of welfare-to-work programs, as well as in other fields, performance governance led to selecting clients with whom performance targets were more easily realized (creaming) and to focusing on quick rather than sustainable job placements or on increased sanctioning (see, e.g., Soss, Fording, and Schram 2011; see also Considine et al. 2015). Finally, in the context of tax assessment, Nissim Cohen and Sagi Gershgoren (2016) point out the problems that arise when street-level workers' incentives clash with the interests of the public. Such clashes lead these bureaucrats to intimidate the public and heighten the asymmetry of information between them and the public, increasing feelings of uncertainty in the latter.

THE ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK: STREET-LEVEL WORKERS' DISCRETION IN CHOICE-BASED SERVICES

Choice-based services come in a variety of forms, such as vouchers (Savas 2000), or other institutional frameworks of choice (Blank 2009). They may be designed to include different target groups and different schemes of choice in relation to the identity of the provider and the content of the service (Greve 2011). The central idea in all forms of service delivery is putting the choice in the hands of service users, with providers paid by the government to fully or partly cover the price of the service (Gilbert and Gilbert 1989). Such arrangements are supposed not only to extend the choice of users but also to give them "real power" (Le Grand 1991, 1263) as, if suppliers do not respond to their wishes, they can take their business elsewhere. In a similar vein, the report of the National Performance Review, led by then-US Vice President Al Gore, says that competition and choice-based arrangements use market dynamics to create incentives that drive street-level workers to "put customers first" (Gore 1993, 16).

For our research, the core question is how choice-based policy environments may influence the ways in which street-level workers carry out their tasks and use their discretion. Building on Lipsky's (1980 [2010]) and Brodtkin's (2011) analytical frameworks, we start with the assumption that street-level workers will respond to an individual calculus of costs and benefits, leading them to select actions that are less costly and more rewarding. This calculus derives from the ratio of resource availability to demand burden as moderated by incentives. Thus, if the choice-based structure changes this calculus of costs and benefits, we might expect that

such governance environments will result in different patterns of discretionary practices and routines at the street level.

While contracting-out arrangements only require street-level agencies to compete for the market (by winning the contract through competitive bidding systems), choice-based services require street-level agencies to compete in the market for individual customers. When clients can choose their provider, the monopoly of the bureaucracy on the delivery of public services vanishes, and the need to compete for customers is supposed to import the principle of customer sovereignty into the realm of public services. Under these conditions, market theory predicts that street-level organizations will have much stronger incentives to be responsive to clients' preferences (Le Grand 1991), and the tasks of recruiting and retaining customers will become central to the success and, at times, to the survival of the organization (Greve 2011).

Nonetheless, these incentives at the level of the organization do not automatically extend to the street level. The question is, therefore, do certain mechanisms bridge the gap between higher-level organizational incentives and street-level workers so that the incentives of the organization penetrate the discretion of the street-level workers? Such mechanisms, for example, may be found if the workers are subject to rewards or sanctions based on their performance in terms of customer recruitment and retention. In the private sector, with the absence of public sector unions' protections, management is usually more flexible both in rewarding workers based on their performance and in penalizing staff and even dismissing them. Therefore, under such circumstances, we expect that street-level workers will be more likely to respond to their managers' expectations.

The effect of customer choice on street-level work is, of course, influenced by the actual level of choice allotted to customers. Experience shows that the level of choice varies considerably between services and is dependent on government regulations and the formation of a competitive market for the service. The ability to make an informed choice can be a difficult task, depending on clients' awareness of their right to choose and on various educational, economic, cultural, lingual, geographical, and other barriers to exercising it (Greve 2011). John Appleby, Tony Harrison, and Nancy Devlin (2003, 24) stress that, "Exercising choice does not necessarily need a lot of knowledge, but informed choice does." This is the case not only for weaker and more vulnerable individuals but also for individuals with relatively high social capital; as some scholars suggest, a nondecision

might be the most common choice (Greve 2011). If choice is, in fact, limited, this may curb the effect of choice on street-level workers' practices.

However, if we assume that choice is truly available to clients, the traditional balance of power between street-level workers, managers, and clients can be expected to change significantly. Based on the analytical framework above, we offer the following two propositions regarding street-level workers' behavior in choice-based environments: (i) street-level workers' responsiveness to clients' preferences and demands is likely to increase, compared to bureaucratic settings, since in a market-like setting it is more rewarding for, and less costly to, street-level workers to make discretionary choices that attract new customers and keep existing ones satisfied; (ii) street-level workers' compliance with management requirements is likely to increase, compared to public bureaucracies, due to the greater ability of managers to control street-level workers' rewards and penalties in the absence of public sector unions' protections. Nonetheless, it is hard to determine exactly how the need to attract and satisfy clients and the need to meet managers' expectations will affect street-level workers' compliance with public policy. The strong pressure to recruit and retain customers may lead to improved performance and responsiveness, but it may also result in deviations from policy and undesirable results in terms of ethics.

In the next section, we examine these contentions in the context of home-nursing services for the elderly in Israel, a publicly funded service delivered by a quasi-market of private providers.

THE CASE: HOME-NURSING SERVICES FOR THE ELDERLY IN ISRAEL

The Elderly Home Care Insurance Act was passed by the Israeli Parliament in 1986 and took effect in 1988 (Ajzenstadt and Rosenhek 2000; Borowski and Schmid 2001; Schmid 2003). It was enacted in response to a substantial growth in the percentage of elderly persons living alone and increased professional support for treating older people in their own homes and communities rather than in institutions. While the Israeli National Insurance Institute (NII) is in charge of funding and regulating the program, the provision of the services is contracted out to private for-profit and nonprofit street-level organizations. The Israeli Ministry of Finance promoted this approach as a means of reducing costs and deliv-

ering services within a relatively short period without adding employees to the civil service payroll (Ajzenstadt and Rosenhek 2000).

The Act establishes elderly home-care services as an in-kind social entitlement for the frail elderly who are completely or partially dependent on assistance to carry out daily activities. The assessment of eligibility is made in two stages. In the first stage, NII assessors determine eligibility based on legally prescribed criteria, such as age, residency, income, and disability. In the next stage, a committee from the local public welfare office determines for the NII the care plan and assigns the beneficiary to the relevant service organizations, usually according to the choice of the elderly clients or their families (State Comptroller 2010). In 2014, 159,000 older people were granted care services in their homes, representing about 16 percent of the elderly population in Israel. About 70 percent of the recipients were female. Although eligibility may start at the age of 62 for women and 67 for men, about 40 percent of the women and 45 percent of the men were over 85 years old.

Over the years, a quasi-market of home-care services for the elderly has developed in Israel. In 2014, 120 street-level for-profit and nonprofit organizations operated elderly-care agencies all over Israel. While in 1989 the market for elderly-care services was divided almost equally between nonprofits and for-profits, the market share of for-profit companies has risen considerably, to the point where they now handle about 73 percent of the elderly eligible for services (Asiskovitch 2015). Most of these agencies are serving the population in large cities; consequently, these cities are the main realms of competition. The employees of these organizations serve as the street-level workers, directly interacting with the elderly and their families. The largest group employed by the organizations comprises home-care workers. In addition, the provider organizations are required to hire social workers to supervise and monitor each client's care plan. Home-care workers are usually paid the minimum wage, while social workers enjoy better working conditions, but neither group is unionized.

The elderly-care agencies and their street-level workers are required to comply with the policy framework established by the Elderly Home Care Insurance Act and the NII's administrative and contractual regulation, as elaborated below. The NII monitors the agencies on the financial and organizational levels, while the local welfare offices are responsible for the home visits. The elderly recipients can complain to the local welfare office or ask to be moved to another provider.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The empirical research of this article is based on an analysis of in-depth interviews with 34 social workers employed by the service providers, as well as the program's policy documents. Given the potential sensitivity of the subject, and since we wanted the interviewees to speak freely, the interviewees were recruited through a convenience sample expanded using the snowball sampling method, without any involvement of the NII or the service providers. This method has proven effective in reaching and involving respondents in discussions about sensitive issues (Cohen and Arieli 2011). The agencies in which research participants worked were all located in large Israeli cities, and 75 percent of the participants worked in for-profit agencies (similar to the share of for-profits in the market). The sample was predominantly female (82 percent), and all participants were social workers with a bachelor's degree. We decided to focus on the social workers because their role in the service delivery (as elaborated below) puts them in an ideal institutional position to provide rich data on how choice plays out at the street level and the tensions and dilemmas this entails. This decision also derived from our particular interest in the implications of the new institutional structures on social workers and our accessibility to this group.

The interviews were semi-structured. The interviewees were asked to describe their roles, their day-to-day work, and their interactions with managers and clients. They were particularly asked to describe tensions and dilemmas they were facing in their work due to conflicting commitments, expectations, and demands. In order to mitigate the limitation of the snowball sampling method in terms of representation, the interviewees were questioned not only about their own experiences but also about the experiences and perceptions of their colleagues (projection questioning). The interviews yielded rich descriptions of the working environment, notably how workers actually carry out their tasks. Interviews lasted between 1 and 2 hours and were recorded and fully transcribed.

For the content analysis, we used open coding (Strauss 1987) with a component of theory-based coding. Provisional codes were developed by reading through the interviews and identifying topics of interest, either because they pertained to issues already flagged in the literature review and in our analytical framework (e.g., competitive pressures and recruiting and retaining clients) or because they emerged in the interview as

issues of vital concern to the participants (e.g., prepping clients for disability assessments, breaking privacy laws, providing cleaning instead of nursing services). Next, we conducted a second-level coding (Huberman and Miles 1994), identifying the most noteworthy and frequent codes and those that best categorize the salient dimensions of the emerging themes and patterns. The coding process was a recursive process whereby we moved back and forth between an inductive and a deductive approach and from segmented descriptive codes to major overarching themes, comparing them to the patterns we expected to find based on the literature review and our analytical framework. These codes were built into categories, and all codes and categories were integrated to identify the central themes in the findings. For example, the codes “recruiting clients” and “retaining clients” were eventually merged into the theme “the new job of social workers.” In addition, the various codes that captured the formal and informal practices used by social workers to cope with the tensions of their new jobs were gathered under two axial categories of “beyond-policy bias” and “counter-policy bias” according to the level to which these practices are in line with the letter and the spirit of the public policy. The final code structure is presented in the appendix.

A systematic policy analysis, in addition to an in-depth exploration of participant experiences, is central to this type of analysis. To this end, we reviewed and analyzed the policy directives of the program as they are inscribed in the enabling law and in the NII’s administrative and contractual regulations. The latter include three sources: NII’s manual for elderly care service providers (hereafter, NII manual), NII’s administrative letters, circulated monthly to the service providers (to date, there are 322 such administrative letters), and NII’s contracts with the service provider (hereafter, the service contract). This analysis enabled us to understand the policy environment in which the social workers are working, to make the linkages between their practices and the formal policy, and to identify when and how practices deviate from formal policy.

EXPLORING STREET-LEVEL WORKERS’ PRACTICES IN A CHOICE-BASED SERVICE

The social workers at the elderly-care agencies are required to comply with NII’s administrative and contractual regulations. These requirements include matching an appropriate home-care worker with each client ac-

cording to his or her needs (NII manual), holding training sessions for home-care workers (NII manual), making home visits to check the physical, emotional, and social condition of the elderly and to ensure they are treated correctly according to the care plan (NII manual; service contract), reporting any changes in the client's care plan to the NII (NII manual; service contract), and making sure home-workers' working hours are reported correctly and records are kept (NII manual; service contract).

However, our findings show that the social workers' day-to-day street-level practices went beyond the formal descriptions of their tasks in the NII's policy documents. In the following section, we present the various ways in which social workers' interactions with managers and clients and work practices were influenced by the choice-based service environment.

SOCIAL WORKER-MANAGER INTERACTIONS: MARKET PRESSURE AND THE NEW JOB OF STREET-LEVEL WORKERS

As mentioned above, a choice-based setting is not necessarily competitive. However, all of our respondents painted a picture of constant competition among the providers in their area. One concluded, "This is a competitive area. . . . There is a continuous threat to the company. . . . Every client can leave us at any given moment." This sense of competitiveness was central to social workers' descriptions of their interactions with managers. Interviewees said that their managers were demanding more efficiency and effectiveness and increased revenues. One noted, "There is always pressure from above (from the management) to bring more people."

The interviews also indicate that the managers of the private companies often rewarded social workers based on their outcomes, especially their ability to meet preset growth targets. One interviewee said, "I receive a bonus for each customer." In fact, we were told that bonuses were an integral part of the social workers' material rewards: "All the social workers who I ever talked with tell me that they receive bonuses." Social workers' performance in terms of client recruitment and retention was assessed in frequent reports and discussed at daily meetings: "There is close monitoring (by the managers) and demands to know about any new customer or if a customer is leaving us. . . . We have daily staff meetings (and) they monitor our electronic reports all day long."

A major theme emerging from the interviews is the centrality of marketing in the role of the social workers. The respondents reported that

managers often required them to follow marketing plans; actually, this represented a significant portion of their work. They were expected to meet with the nurses, doctors, community social workers, and other professionals in the local health maintenance organizations (HMOs), regional hospitals, nursing homes, day-care centers, and social service departments, and with anyone who had the potential to serve as a direct channel for the transfer of new cases.

All of our respondents except for one told us that marketing was a significant part of their role. One of our interviewees explained, "Once a week I have a 'marketing day' . . . [when] I visit hospitals, health insurance funds, call on nurses, and contact various officials in the community." Another said:

I get compensation according to the number of names I bring. . . . I've found clients on the street; I just "catch" them. . . . I always have all the necessary forms in my bag in case I "catch" someone. . . . One day I saw an old man in the street with a walker. . . . I got out of my car and asked him if he needed help, if he had a caregiver. . . . I talked to him and now he is with my company. . . . If I bring in a new patient to stay, I get a bonus.

The pressure on social workers from their managers sometimes led them to break privacy laws to recruit new clients. One of our interviewees admitted:

In fact, we get details about the patient, not always with their knowledge. Sometimes yes, but sometimes someone in the local welfare office just gives us a phone number and tells us: "Do not say that I gave it to you." Therefore, I have some sort of breach of confidentiality. We are definitely taking advantage of it, no doubt. [With] doctors and nurses the breakdown is complete. Many of them give us the patients' contact details without anyone knowing.

In some cases, these informal practices were a response to work overload and the desire to shorten procedures. As one of our interviewees explained:

According to the law they must not give the names of patients, they should bring the clients a list of all nursing agencies. . . . But if the social worker in the public hospital wants to save herself the headache, and she

knows that she [the social worker in the private company] is trustworthy, she says, "Come and take this case" . . . so I come and fill out the forms with her.

Another added, "It is indeed forbidden to give us details . . . but this is why your relationship with (people) in the field is important. . . . If they [decision makers in the HMOs, hospitals, and welfare offices] know that they can trust you and that you are doing a good job, they will give you information." One interviewee even said, "There are [social workers] that pay cash to nurses in the HMOs . . . to nurses who give them names [of potential clients]."

Most of our respondents felt uncomfortable engaging in what they saw as market-oriented practices. Nearly 60 percent experienced significant tension between their marketing role and their professional identity as social worker. One told us, "Sometimes it is very difficult. . . . We work at a private firm, but in our hearts we are not businessmen." Another said, "This is something that is very difficult for me. . . . It is unbearable . . . the importance of profits, profits, profits, which is often at the expense of the welfare of my patients." The rest of our sample did not perceive this tension as significant or even see their marketing role as coinciding with their professional duties. One rationalized, "My manager said that these days, without money you cannot really help your clients . . . so if the company makes more money, we can help more people."

SOCIAL WORKER-CLIENT INTERACTIONS: CHANGING POWER RELATIONS

Another central theme emerging from the interviews was the changing power relationship between the clients and the street-level workers. The context of this is, not surprisingly, the need to recruit and retain clients. Our interviewees described many instances when, in an effort to attract clients, social workers offered services that went beyond NII requirements. For example, they said that many elderly-care agencies have developed a practice of offering their services during the application process, which may take several weeks, at their own expense. Others have developed specialized services targeted at particular groups, such as Russian immigrants or the ultra-orthodox religious community. Some interviewees described practices of prepping potential clients before their meetings with the NII

assessors (at which the level of disability and eligibility is determined), hoping that once they were found eligible, they would join the company that helped them. This can be seen as an additional service of helping elderly people take up their legally prescribed rights, but at the same time it may encourage unethical behavior among the social workers. As one interviewee explained, he is “not telling the client how to lie, but explaining to him how to ‘exaggerate the truth.’”

The interviewees mentioned instances of clients using threats to pressure them. One informant stated: “There are those [clients] who threaten: ‘There are a lot of nursing companies in the market. We will go to another company’ . . . They also threatened to contact the local welfare office.” Another said, “There are customers who say, ‘There are other companies’ or, ‘I got a better offer from another company’ . . . Many times they are lying to make us do our best for them.”

Most of the social workers reported feeling very vulnerable to these threats. One explained, “I will do anything because I know that this elderly person must not leave my company. My income depends on that. . . . We already have to deal with people who have passed away or moved to a nursing home. . . . I must keep anyone I can here.” These threats seemed to increase social workers’ responsiveness to the clients’ preferences and demands: “You see, because the elderly have real power, I don’t have time to ignore or delay their request. . . . Some of them are demanding what they need. If you don’t answer their need, they will immediately call the welfare office, and the welfare office will call you . . . and they can also leave the company.”

In these cases, social workers not only applied policies differently from the way they were intended to be applied, but they sometimes did so in a manner that explicitly contradicted public policy and professional considerations and ethics. Common examples include turning a blind eye in cases when they knew they were appointing the clients’ relatives as their caregivers (prohibited by NII’s administrative letter no. 194), or ignoring the sexual harassment of female caregivers by their elderly male clients (contrary to NII’s administrative letter no. 304). A very common example was permitting the elderly to receive ineligible services from their caregivers. For instance, NII regulations forbid caregivers from providing extensive home cleaning services (NII manual). However almost all of the social workers we interviewed broke these rules, allowing this practice to become a *modus operandi*. More specifically, when a caregiver cleans the

home of her elderly, “she goes home and accepts payment for the hours, which the government approves as treatment hours, although in practice she did not actually work all these hours.” One of our interviewees explained the social workers’ dilemma:

The law defines clearly which treatments are included . . . but the elderly should receive all the hours of treatment to which they are entitled. . . . If the caregiver does beyond what he needs and goes home early? . . . Now, on the one hand, I have a loyalty to the system. . . . On the other hand, I say to myself, that is what the old man wants. . . [and] it is good for him. What do I care? So it is better that I don’t know about that. Both sides are satisfied here. . . . In short, this is a conflict between my loyalty to the company, and I admit, I do not want my company to lose money. . . . So this is a clash between the needs of the elderly and my loyalty to the system.

Yet the data indicate that this environment did not necessarily inspire the social workers to seek the best for their clients; rather, they work mainly as agents of the market interests of their organization. For example, some informants said they did not inform clients about their right to visit community centers or install panic buttons in their houses because doing so might reduce the number of hours the firm could bill for its services. One of our interviewees explained:

I keep reminding myself that we are a for-profit organization. I am sitting here because we have customers. . . . I remind myself that the fact that we are the best at what we do gives my clients the best possible service. . . . The clients’ needs and my organizational needs are my main interests and values. But the good of my organization is much more dominant. . . . What is good for my organization is good for me, and what is good for me eventually will be good for the customer.

Another acknowledged the social workers’ economic self-interests: “Given the fact that I receive 500 NIS [New Israeli Shekel] for a new client as a bonus, if I recommend that he go to a community center, I would lose this money.”

Moreover, according to the social workers who participated in our study, not all clients use the power of choice. The elderly who are more

knowledgeable, have better bargaining abilities, and take a more aggressive stance receive more exceptions and better treatment than those who lack such qualities. While for some clients, usually the weak elderly, social workers “ignore their requests . . . or even ‘fib’ to them,” in other cases, for example, when the strong elderly threaten to leave the company, social workers “come to their house, talk with them and even ‘lick their asses.’” Our interviewees also described cases when their refusal to make exceptions for strong clients eventually caused these clients to leave.

DISCUSSION

The case study illustrates the significant influence of choice-based arrangements on the practices and decision making of street-level workers. It demonstrates that when customers can choose their social service supplier, the need to compete for customers and to recruit and retain them creates a different working environment for street-level workers, pushing them to develop new practices and strategies. The extent to which elderly clients can really exercise their right to choose providers may be contested, but the important point is that in the case studied, the social workers at least perceived their environment as competitive.

Even though our analytical framework anticipates that the market-like setting in a choice-based service will influence the social workers’ behavior, we were surprised by the centrality of market logic and incentives in our informants’ narratives about their daily routines, with the rise of a distinctive new job for street-level workers—recruiting and retaining customers. Not officially required by the NII’s formal policy, this job seems to have naturally evolved from the choice-based setting and the organizational needs that stem from such a structure of service delivery (for a similar explanation of the rising importance of marketing under competitive pressures in the context of education, see Loeb et al. [2011]). In that respect, choice-based services are opening up new territories for street-level research.

The case also suggests that the new job of the street-level workers and the market logic that comes with it may influence their obligation to comply with formal policies, professional guidelines, and ethics. Our examination of the various practices of the social workers suggests that two types of policy biases may arise from the competitive pressures of a choice-based environment: beyond-policy bias and counter-policy bias (see table 1). Beyond-policy biases are exceptions and cases when the social workers

TABLE 1. Beyond-Policy and Counter-Policy Biases in Choice-Based Service Environment

	Beyond-Policy	Counter-Policy
Main characteristics	<div>1. More efficiency and effectiveness in providing services</div> <div>2. More responsiveness to clients' needs</div> <div>3. Improving economic performance</div> <div>4. Improving the quality and delivery of public services</div>	<div>1. Bending professional principles in order to increase clients' satisfaction</div> <div>2. Breaches and improper conduct designed to satisfy assertive clients</div> <div>3. Surrender to clients' dictates in order to retain them as clients</div> <div>4. Promising potential clients inappropriate exceptions in order to recruit them as clients</div>
Congruence with the policy	Medium-high	Low
Policy implications	Accords with the policy's spirit and improves it	Contradicts the public policy and public values
Ethical implications	Normative behavior	Negative behavior

apply the policies differently from the manner in which their designers envisioned. However, in practice, these biases accord with the spirit of the policies and improve them. Hence, we may consider these biases normative. Examples include reaching out to the elderly to make them aware of their right to receive nursing services or adjusting services to suit special groups such as immigrants and religiously observant individuals to increase their satisfaction and retain them as clients in the competitive market.

Counter-policy biases occur when the social workers apply the policies differently from the manner in which their designers envisioned them and do so in a way that contradicts their underlying values. Examples include providing better treatment or services to clients who are tough negotiators to attract them or to keep them with the company, breaking privacy laws to get information on new potential clients, or supplying cleaning services instead of nursing services to patients but reporting to the government that the services provided are nursing services. This runs counter to previous findings in the literature, especially the finding that private providers are strongly committed to implementing public policy as laid down in the contract by the government (see, e.g., Lipsky and Smith 1993; Dias and Maynard-Moody 2007).

Both beyond-policy and counter-policy biases are a result of the social workers' interactions with their managers, their clients, and the public policy. Since the empirical framework of this study does not include a comparison group of workers operating in a traditional bureaucratic setting, it is not possible to directly compare the relative behaviors of street-

level workers in choice-based versus traditional bureaucratic contexts. Nevertheless, our findings illustrate how managers of the private agencies use various techniques, both overt and covert, to pressure street-level workers to attract and retain clients and to increase the number of billable treatment hours per client. This includes, for example, pressures to increase marketing efforts by tightly monitoring this aspect of the social workers' work and by paying bonuses based on the number of new and retained customers.

The clients, in turn, seem to contribute to this outcome. Social workers' fear that assertive clients will move to a different supplier weakens their position vis-à-vis the clients, increasing their willingness to respond to the clients' preferences and dictates. Their improved bargaining position enables these clients to use pressure strategies such as threats and intimidation to get what they want. These strategies prompt feelings of uncertainty in social workers, pushing them to soften their interpretations of policy or even to ignore or break formal rules.

However, an examination of the sort of rule bending and rule breaking used by the nursing agencies' social workers suggests that they are more likely to accommodate customer requests when fulfilling these requests will help to recruit or retain that customer without incurring direct additional costs to their employer. For instance, providing cleaning services to elderly clients is against the rules but does not cost more to the providers, unlike letting clients know about their rights to other services that might decrease the home-care hours. Thus, the social workers' practices are filtered by the economic interests of their employers.

Furthermore, and more important, some practices of the social workers seem aimed at reducing the access of customers to choice. A somewhat tricky example is the practice of offering services during the application period at the private agency's expense. On the one hand, this is an example of a beyond-policy innovation that provides prompt service to clients even before the NII bureaucratic machinery processes their applications. On the other hand, this practice works to limit client choice. By offering free service for a couple of weeks, the social workers hope to attract clients before they are exposed to the full range of choice options. Hence, while previous research on street-level work practices reveals practices aimed at limiting complaints (Brodkin 1997; Lens 2005, 2013), our study identifies similar efforts, but in this case the efforts are aimed at limiting choice. This may create another set of barriers preventing customers from making an informed choice of provider.

Therefore, it seems that in the choice-based environment, besides their identity as client agents and state agents (Maynard-Moody and Musheno 2003), street-level workers develop a third identity as market agents. In their identity as market agents, they use their discretion primarily to meet the economic interests of their organization. Like citizen agents, market agents will be more responsive to their clients' wants, but these will be filtered by the economic worthiness rather than the moral worthiness of their clients. In that respect, in choice-based services, and probably also in other triangular structures of service delivery, the business incentives of the private organization may become a central driver of rule bending and policy deviation.

The case suggests that not all clients are equally empowered by choice. Differential access to services is not new and is found throughout public bureaucracies (Le Grand 1991). In fact, in any institutional arrangement, wealthier, better-educated, and more assertive clients will gain advantages over those who are more disadvantaged. However, our findings indicate that the elderly who are more knowledgeable and have better bargaining abilities are more likely to tap into the full range of options choice offers. Therefore, although choice may empower all clients, the relative power gap between assertive versus weak clients may actually increase. Moreover, it seems that, as in other examples of rapid societal and economic change, giving people more power without teaching them how to use it is problematic. In the case in question, this applies to both weak and assertive clients. However, while the former need to be educated on how to effectively exercise the power of choice, the latter need to be educated on how to exercise this power more responsibly and avoid its inappropriate use.

Thus, the case study paints a complex picture of choice-based services when examined from a street-level perspective. On the one hand, they clearly fall short of the highly celebrated notion of making customers/citizens the masters of public services. Even in a case where street-level organizations and workers perceive the realm as competitive, clients' preferences and needs are subordinated to the economic interest of the private providers. In addition, policy makers' control over the implementation of the program seems to weaken with the limited ability to secure central policy objectives, such as eliminating the exchange of cleaning for care. Perhaps more rigorous monitoring and enforcement by the NII might have led to different outcomes, but our point is that choice-based strategies seem to inherently weaken central control of policy implemen-

tation, particularly when the policy contradicts the street-level organizations' or the clients' interests.

However, such lax central control may be a positive development in service delivery, at least when it better accommodates clients' desires. The decision to structure a service around client choice indicates a policy decision to delegate policy making, at least to some extent, to the interactions between clients and providers at the street level. This decision opens a greater space for policy that grows from the bottom up (though, as mentioned, in a privatized setting, it might be significantly filtered through the providers' economic interests). In that respect, although choice-based management by no means represents a flawless system of governance, it seems to offer some interesting advantages in terms of responsiveness to clients when compared to bureaucratic and other non-choice-based NPM arrangements.

This, in turn, raises the question of when and why choice is offered to the users of social services. As Brodtkin (2007, 2011) and Larsen (2013) convincingly argue, when considering governance strategies, it is crucial to recognize that choices about organizational form also involve choices about who will exercise discretion and under what circumstances. In that respect, we might well ask why, for example, despite the extensive use of privatization and performance-based steering in welfare programs, these new institutional arrangements are generally intended to limit access to benefits and reduce welfare rolls (see, e.g., Benish 2010, 2014a), while giving welfare recipients the ability to choose their providers is almost unheard of (Benish 2014b). The same question can be posed in many other realms of social services. This is not to argue that choice is effective or appropriate in every social service. Rather, we suggest that the focus on privatization and performance-based steering in social services and not on choice strategies, which clearly most closely imitate a market setting, may reflect a political tendency to control, rather than empower, the clients of social services (Soss et al. 2011).

As this is a single case, with its specificities of time, place, and policy domain, we do not claim that the same behaviors will be demonstrated in all choice-based services. There is a need for further research on street-level work under choice-based strategies, particularly using research designs that allow for direct comparisons with street-level practices in traditional bureaucratic environments. These comparative studies should be conducted for various policy domains, countries, and welfare state regimes. Such studies would develop this initial conceptualization of new street-level roles and practices in choice-based environments. In addition, the integration of

quantitative and qualitative methods would help quantify the scope of these behaviors and their variations across countries and policy domains. Better understanding street-level workers' behavior in choice-based social services could provide a basis for developing managerial strategies that are better suited to the ways street-level organizations really work (Brodkin 2011).

APPENDIX

Coding Tree

- Market pressures/Perceptions of competitive environment
- The new job of social workers:
 - Recruiting clients
 - Retaining clients
- Social worker–manager interactions:
 - Management's pressures and rewards
 - Oversight by management
- Social worker–client interactions:
 - Clients' threats and pressures:
 - Assertive clients
 - Nonassertive clients
- Beyond-policy bias:
 - Specialized services for target populations
 - Prepping potential clients for disability assessments
 - Offering services during the application services
- Counter-policy bias:
 - Breaking privacy laws
 - Appointing relatives as caregivers
 - Ignoring sexual harassment
 - Providing ineligible services
 - Cleaning services instead of nursing services
 - Letting clients know about other services

NOTE

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Long-Term Employment and Earnings Patterns of Welfare Recipients: The Role of the Local Labor Market

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ABSTRACT Many Western countries have introduced welfare reforms that limit public assistance for the long-term unemployed and that spur rapid movement into the labor market. The work-first nature of these new policies means that the success of welfare recipients depends greatly on demand-side constraints, more particularly on local labor market conditions. Based on longitudinal administrative data of all single mothers who received cash benefits when the Israeli welfare reform was implemented ($N = 45,000$), this study focuses on the role of the local labor market in explaining single mothers' long-term employment and earnings patterns. The results indicate notable diversity in employment and earnings patterns. Some mothers showed stable or improved attachment to the labor force, while others showed a much less stable pattern and about a quarter had a very weak attachment to paid employment. Local labor market conditions and their change over time play an important part in explaining these various patterns.

INTRODUCTION

Over the past 2 decades, many Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries, Israel included, have introduced welfare reforms reflecting a work-based policy regime. A central goal of these reforms is to reduce welfare dependence and to increase self-sufficiency by implementing measures encouraging (or requiring) cash welfare recipients to take steps to find employment (Gilbert 2005; Herbst 2012). However, the transition from welfare to work can be rocky, particularly for vulnerable groups such as single mothers. It may greatly depend on labor market conditions, especially given that the work-first nature of many welfare reforms

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relies heavily on local labor markets' ability to absorb welfare recipients (Herbst and Stevens 2010).

The post-reform literature on work and welfare use documents the case-load dynamics, welfare exit routes, labor outcomes, and economic well-being of current and former welfare recipients' following the welfare reforms in many countries. In general, these studies suggest that employment and earnings rose substantially, while welfare use declined, especially among single mothers (e.g., Cancian et al. 2003; Acs and Loprest 2004, 2007; Meyer and Sullivan 2004; Blank 2006; Shannon 2009; Finn and Gloster 2010). However, much of the literature suggests that many welfare recipients and welfare leavers experience job instability and multiple spells of unemployment, have low earnings, and endure material hardship and poverty even when working; moreover, the proportion of families disconnected from both work and welfare has risen (e.g., Cancian et al. 2003; Moffitt and Winder 2005; Nam 2005; Turner, Danziger, and Seefeldt 2006; Acs and Loprest 2007; Blank 2007; Blank and Kovak 2009; Loprest and Nichols 2011).

Most studies on the employment and earnings of welfare stayers and leavers follow them for a relatively short period of time, and little is known about this group's long-term employment and earnings patterns and the factors that explain them. Furthermore, the unstable nature of employment experienced by current and former welfare recipients draws attention to the role of structural factors, especially local labor market conditions. Vulnerable groups, especially the poor, depend much more on market conditions than other workers do. They are often less attractive to employers because they lack high-demand skills, or, as is the case with single mothers, because they bear weighty family burdens. Many welfare recipients also have unstable work histories and past experience in low-wage jobs and are more confined to local labor markets. Dependence on the local labor market creates wide diversity in the labor outcomes of vulnerable groups, as labor markets differ in employment opportunities and the generosity of wage offers. Local markets also respond in varied ways to overall economic trends. Studies have demonstrated the reliance of welfare recipients and low-skilled workers on the business cycle and their high vulnerability in times of economic recession (Hofferth, Stanhope, and Harris 2005; Lerman 2005; Moffitt 2008; Hill 2012). Nonetheless, knowledge of how local labor market conditions affect the long-term employment and earnings patterns of welfare recipients is limited. The relatively small number of studies that focus on this issue look at welfare recipients' welfare/employment status (Herbst and Stevens 2010),

examine welfare spells and recidivism (Hoynes 2000), or track welfare recipients' economic progress using several benchmarks (Wood, Moore, and Rangarajan 2008). None of these studies examine the effect of local economic conditions on the long-term employment and earnings patterns of this group.

Furthermore, most of our knowledge of the long-term labor market experience of welfare recipients derives mainly from local studies in the United States that reflect that country's context with respect to welfare reform and caseload characteristics (for a review of data sources, see Danziger [2011]). There is an evident need for more detailed empirical work in other OECD countries, as labor behavior among recipients depends on the nature of the welfare system, on the particular groups targeted by welfare reforms, and on the institutional and labor market contexts in which welfare reforms are implemented. What can be learned from one reform in its particular context may not necessarily be generalized to reforms elsewhere (Fok and McVicar 2012).

This article focuses on Israeli single mothers who received Income Support Benefits (ISB) at a time of far-reaching changes in welfare policy (2002–3) and tracks their work patterns and income stream until 2007. Our goal is to identify the long-term employment and earnings trajectories of welfare recipients over the 6 years following the Israeli welfare reform (2002–7) and to examine the role of local labor market conditions beyond individual characteristics and life events in explaining these patterns. The study's contribution is threefold. First, it sets out the long-term labor market experience of welfare recipients in a policy context other than that of the United States. Second, by combining individual-level and labor market characteristics in a multilevel framework, the study offers a more accurate account of supply and demand factors and their effect on the employment patterns of vulnerable groups. Third, while we make no attempt to evaluate the effect of the policy change on the welfare recipients' labor supply, the study's analysis of the monthly data for the first 6 years following the Israeli welfare reform provides a unique account of work patterns after a major policy shift. This type of knowledge is limited even in the US literature.

THE ISRAELI CONTEXT

WELFARE POLICY IN ISRAEL

The Income Support Program (ISP) administered by the National Insurance Institute (NII) in Israel is a selective program—eligibility is condi-

tioned on passing an income test—aimed to guarantee minimum income for families with limited means of providing for themselves. The level of Income Support Benefit (ISB) for single mothers depends on the number of dependent children, and the amount of benefits paid to the family is determined by an income test. Families whose income from work does not exceed the disregarded income are entitled to the full benefit. For those with higher earnings, a 60 percent offset rate is imposed.¹ In addition, eligibility for ISB in Israel is contingent on a work test. Welfare recipients are required to regularly report to the local employment service and to accept any job offered them by the employment officer. Recipients who fail the work test—who do not meet the attendance obligation or who refuse to accept a job offer—are subject to benefit deprivation for 2 months. However, work test exemption is given to certain groups of recipients, among them mothers of young children and recipients defined as “unplaceable” (temporarily or permanently),² due to their own health limitations, their child’s health condition, or personal problems.³

The trend of restructuring public assistance programs reached Israel in 2002–3. The new policy was nationally implemented, and the same legislative changes were applied at once to all types of families covered by the ISP. The assumption underlying the policy change was that the ISB level was too generous compared with the minimum wage and hence encouraged dependence and discouraged employment. In 2003, the ISB was reduced by 16 percent for a single parent with one child and by 22 percent for a single parent with two children or more. At the same time, the disregarded income level was reduced (from 35 percent to 15 percent of the monthly minimum wage), and the previous exemption from the work test given to mothers of preschool-age children (younger than 7 years) was lim-

1. Earnings above the disregarded income are deducted from the benefit at the rate of 0.6 New Israeli Shekel (NIS) for 1.00 NIS. ISB is reset (= 0) at an earning level that is below the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) threshold for single parents, so the implicit tax rate of welfare recipients is strictly the offset rate.

2. This group of recipients is usually described in the US context as “hard to serve.”

3. The following scheme clarifies the calculation of ISB: (a) (monthly earnings-disregarded earnings) \times 0.6 (offset rate) = considered earnings. (b) ISB-guaranteed income for single parents according to the number of dependent children. (b) – (a) = monthly ISB amount. The benefit is reset (= 0) when (b) – (a) = 0.

ited to mothers with a child younger than age 2.⁴ In addition, exemptions for recipients defined as “unplaceable” were canceled (National Insurance Institute 2002–3, 2004). The Israeli reform strengthened the incentive to work, especially for single mothers. A stringent income test and the expansion of the work test to mothers of young children considerably changed the trade-off mothers face between work and welfare. However, the new legislation did not establish specific work requirements in terms of working hours, and, as before, recipients had to accept any job offered to them by the local employment service. Only in cases of refusal to work even a few hours a week was a 2-month sanction imposed. In practice, recipients could work very little and still receive supplemental ISB, which remained extremely low after the reform.

The Israeli context differs from that of many other countries that introduced welfare reforms, particularly from the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program under the US federal reform, in two respects. First, it provides a context of a uniform, nationwide reform that does not include any local welfare-to-work initiatives or local discretion in designing and operating cash assistance and other work-related programs for families with children as in the United States (Blank 2001; Cadena, Danziger, and Seefeldt 2006; Bentele and Nicoli 2012; Hill 2012). This policy homogeneity also makes it possible to measure the effect of the local labor market more accurately, as there is no possible interaction between different policy components and local conditions. Second, the Israeli reform does not establish work requirements in terms of working hours, employment exemptions are given to mothers with children younger than 2 years old, and there is no time limit for benefit receipt. That is, although the new policy reduces the benefit and the disregarded income amount, the Israeli support scheme not only enables recipients to work and receive the full benefit amount but also makes it possible for them to increase their earnings up to a certain level and to stay on welfare. This policy makes combining work and welfare for long periods quite common.

4. ISB for a single parent with one child was reduced from NIS 2,783 to NIS 2,333 (from 83 percent to 70 percent of the monthly minimum wage in the economy); ISB for a single parent with two children was reduced from NIS 3,485 to NIS 2,716 (from 104 percent to 81 percent of the monthly minimum wage).

However, at the time of this study, no active measures were taken to increase the disposable income of those employed (such as tax credits) or to relieve work-related expenses. The incentive to work in Israel is almost solely driven by the low level of support. Thus, the Israeli system provides welfare recipients with greater social protection than the US system does, as recipients can stay in the system for longer periods, but at the same time it offers little if any help to low-wage working mothers. This policy context might be translated into unique long-term labor patterns. A higher degree of protection that provides a stable source of income (albeit insufficient to meet a family's basic needs) might serve as psychological safety net, while no provision of financial help for those in the labor market should affect employment and earnings patterns. This protection might also weaken the effect of local economic conditions on welfare recipients' behavior, particularly on their earnings patterns, as they depend less on these conditions.

THE ISRAELI LABOR MARKET

Following the recovery of the Israeli economy from the dot-com economic recession in the early 2000s, the period 2003–7 was characterized by significant and continuous economic growth and an impressive increase in employment in all economic branches. Employment rates in the 24–54 age group rose from 69.3 percent in 2003 to 73 percent in 2007, while the overall unemployment rate declined from almost 9.4 percent to 6.2 percent (Central Bureau of Statistics 2008). The employment rate among women in the 25–64 age group rose from 60 percent in 2002–3 to 65 percent in 2007 and was higher than the OECD average (61 percent), approaching that of the United States (69 percent; Central Bureau of Statistics 2008 http://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DatasetCode=DEC_I).⁵ The average wage for salaried women rose from 115 percent of the monthly minimum wage in 2002 to 121 percent in 2007. Despite this expansion, real wages increased only moderately and were particularly low for employees in the unskilled or low-skilled sectors. Wage inequality was much wider than it is in many

5. The employment rate among women in the age group of 15–64 was 55 percent in 2003 (compared to an average of 55 percent in the OECD countries, and to 65.7 percent in the United States). By 2007, this rate was 59 percent in Israel, compared to 57.3 percent in the OECD and to 65.9 percent in the United States.

European countries and was closer to levels of inequality in the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom (with Gini coefficients in the upper 20s and lower 30s). For example, the wages ratio of full-time, salaried workers in the 90th percentile to those in the 10th percentile was almost identical in Israel and in the United States: 5.14 and 4.98, respectively (2007), and the wages ratio of full-time, salaried workers in the 50th percentile to those in the 10th percentile was 1.9 in Israel and 2.1 in United States (OECD 2011). This considerable inequality was related to a high incidence of low-paid employment, which, according to the OECD, refers to those who are employed in full-time jobs with earnings less than two-thirds of the median wage. In 2007, this rate was about 22 percent in Israel and 24 percent in the United States. The minimum wage level (which is fixed in law) was 42 percent of the average wage and 56 percent of the median wage for a salaried worker employed full-time (compared to 24 percent and 31 percent in the United States, respectively; OECD 2010). In 2007, some 13 percent of salaried workers in Israel earned an hourly wage not exceeding the minimum wage. This proportion was higher for women: almost 15 percent compared with nearly 11 percent for men (Bank of Israel 2007). In addition, 40 percent of salaried workers had total earnings less than the monthly minimum wage (Bendelac 2009). These figures indicate the high prevalence of low-wage employment in Israel.

SINGLE-PARENT FAMILIES IN ISRAEL

At the time of this study, single-parent families living in Israel comprised 7.5 percent of all families and nearly 13 percent of all families with children; 95 percent of single-parent families were headed by a woman. Most of the single mothers in Israel are divorced (61 percent), and the proportion of mothers who never married is lower than in other Western countries (17 percent).⁶ In the United States, for example, single-parent families account for about 33 percent of all families, and 40 percent of single parents have never been married. Single-parent families have relatively fewer children than couple-headed families in Israel, with 55 percent of single parents having one child, compared to about 40 percent in the United States,

6. The remaining 23 percent are widowed and separated woman (those who married but who are living alone with their children).

United Kingdom, and Canada (Skinner, Bradshaw, and Davidson 2008; Achdut 2010; Stier 2011). About 20 percent of single-parent families are immigrants who entered Israel during a period of mass migration from the former Soviet Union in the 1990s (Achdut 2010).

Around 2005, employment rates were higher for single mothers in the 18–64 age group than for married mothers (69 percent vs. 59 percent, respectively). These employment rates are similar to those in other European countries, and they are somewhat lower than those in Canada (71 percent) and in the United States (73 percent; Stier 2011). In 2003, approximately 40 percent of single mothers in Israel were ISB recipients, among whom immigrant single mothers were overrepresented, as this program served as a policy measure for economic assistance to this group.⁷

Compared with married mothers, a higher proportion of single mothers in Israel held part-time jobs (34 percent of single mothers worked 20 hours a week or less), and they showed higher unemployment rates (12.1 percent for single mothers vs. 7.8 percent for married mothers in 2005). During the study period, the unemployment rate declined continuously in this group of single mothers; in 2007, it was 8.4 percent, but it remained relatively high compared with that for married mothers (5.1 percent). Among unemployed single mothers, the rate of those suffering from long-term unemployment (50 weeks or more) was 30 percent, compared with 22 percent among married mothers (Achdut 2010).

Despite the increase in employment, poverty rates of single-parent families rose substantially from 25 percent in 2003 to nearly 30 percent in 2007 (National Insurance Institute 2002–3, 2008). This rate was higher than that in most European countries but lower than that in the United States and Canada (around 40 percent; Stier 2011). This increase was not unique to single-parent families, as poverty expanded in all other population groups. As a result of the deep cuts in social spending, the tax/benefit system became much less effective in reducing overall poverty: the reduc-

7. ISB and housing assistance systems played a central role in Israel's absorption policy during the 1990s and early 2000s. The mass migration to Israel, mostly from the former Soviet Union, included a high proportion of single mothers who were automatically entitled to ISB and housing benefits as part of the overall governmental aid to new immigrants. This resulted in immigrant single mothers being overrepresented among ISB recipients, accounting for about half of all single mothers on ISB (compared with about a quarter in the general population of single mothers).

tion rate in Israel is 21 percent, compared to an average of 60 percent across OECD countries (OECD 2010).

PREVIOUS STUDIES

The literature on welfare recipients' employment and earnings in the post-welfare reform era is substantial. Most of these studies suggest that many welfare leavers are employed but suffer from unstable employment and low earnings, return to welfare, or become disconnected from both work and welfare (e.g., Danziger, Corcoran, et al. 2002; Danziger, Heflin, et al. 2002; Cancian et al. 2003; Blank 2007; Danziger 2011; Loprest and Nichols 2011). However, empirical evidence on the long-term labor market experience (more than 3 years) of welfare stayers and leavers is still limited, especially regarding the role of local labor market conditions in explaining long-term employment and earnings patterns. Additionally, many studies that track the progress of welfare recipients in the labor market do not focus on identifying and categorizing their employment and earnings patterns. Some studies examine labor outcomes for one single outcome period (e.g., Cancian et al. 2003; Hauan and Douglas 2004; Dworsky and Courtney 2007); others consider the cumulative duration of employment in a defined follow-up period (e.g., Danziger, Kalil, and Anderson 2000; Danziger and Seefeldt 2002; Corcoran, Danziger, and Tolman 2004) or describe the average employment and earnings pattern (e.g., Danziger and Johnson 2004; Moffitt and Winder 2005; for review of findings, see Seefeldt [2004] and Blank [2006]). In the following section, we review empirical evidence on welfare recipients' long-term labor market outcomes and discuss their factors.

LONG-TERM EMPLOYMENT AND EARNINGS PATTERNS

A study on job quality and job transition patterns among welfare recipients in Michigan finds that although employment and earnings increased over time, only 16 percent of women worked continuously over the 5-year period of the study and about a third were continuously unemployed or endured long or recurrent unemployment spells (Johnson and Corcoran 2003). Sheldon Danziger and Rucker Johnson (2004), in their 6-year monthly follow-up study, found that Michigan welfare recipients worked about two-thirds

of the time, that about one-third worked continuously (90 percent or more of the time), and that about 12 percent worked for less than one-third of the time. The average employment spell was 10 months, followed by a month of nonemployment. Median earnings among those who worked increased by 25 percent. However, at the end of the 6-year study period, about half of the working mothers had jobs that did not pay enough to keep a family of three out of poverty, and more than one-third had no job. Using three benchmarks—welfare exit, employment, and poverty exit—Robert Wood, Quinn Moore, and Anu Rangarajan (2008) document the long-term economic progress experienced by New Jersey welfare recipients in the 5–6 years after they entered the TANF program. They find that most sample members (88 percent) were employed at some point during the study period but experienced work interruptions and multiple spells of employment interspersed with long periods of unemployment (the median unemployment spell was 8 months). Most of the respondents went back and forth between work and welfare, with only 10 percent achieving the three aforementioned benchmarks within 3 years and maintaining them through the end of the follow-up period. By the end of the 5-year follow-up, 40 percent were employed, off welfare, and out of poverty.

Although previous research has examined employment and earnings outcomes over a short period of time and a few studies have documented the long-term labor market experience of welfare recipients (e.g., Johnson and Corcoran 2003; Danziger and Johnson 2004; Wood et al. 2008), few studies have explicitly categorized and explained welfare recipients' long-term employment and earnings patterns. An exception is Chi-Fang Wu, Maria Cancian, and Daniel Meyer's (2008) study, which identifies seven employment and earnings patterns of Wisconsin welfare recipients over 6 years. Wu and colleagues develop an approach to categorizing long-term patterns—some of whose basic principles we adopted, as we show later—that shows that less than half of the women (46 percent) succeeded in gaining long-term employment: they were continuously employed (19 percent), increased their attachment to the labor force (8 percent), or were inconsistently employed but worked most of the study's last year and a half (18 percent). With respect to earnings, the most common pattern was continuously low earnings (28 percent); next came an unstable pattern that ended in low earnings (23 percent). Only 22 percent of the women advanced in earnings. Some women achieved consistent or improved employment

trajectories without increasing their earnings, which indicates that employment success did not necessarily translate into earnings success.

CHARACTERISTICS ASSOCIATED WITH LONG-TERM LABOR OUTCOMES AND THE IMPORTANCE OF DEMAND-SIDE FACTORS

Previous studies that tracked welfare recipients and leavers in the short term (1 year) and the intermediate term (up to 3 years) indicate that welfare recipients with richer human capital, without physical or mental health problems, with fewer and older children, and who lived in metropolitan areas with access to transportation were more likely to leave welfare and to maintain employment, to increase their earnings over time, and to experience some economic success (for a review of these factors, see Blank [2006]). Long-term studies show broadly similar findings to those of mid-term studies, with some exceptions (see Wood et al. [2008] and Wu et al. [2008] for comparative results). For example, Robert Wood and colleagues (2008) find that having more than a high school diploma was positively related to achieving and sustaining each of the four economic benchmarks: welfare exit, employment, poverty exit, and overall economic progress (i.e., achieving all of the first three benchmarks). Previous work experience was positively associated with the likelihood of achieving all four economic benchmarks, but not with sustaining them. Having health problems that limited one's ability to work was estimated to decrease the likelihood of achieving any of the benchmarks examined and to reduce the likelihood of sustaining overall economic progress. Chi-Fang Wu and colleagues (2008) similarly explain long-term employment and earnings success. However, they find that previous work experience was positively related to long-term success.

Many post-reform studies document the importance of supply-side factors (recipients' characteristics) in determining labor and welfare use outcomes, and only a few have focused on the demand side. The latter is important for understanding the work patterns and economic outcomes of welfare recipients (Hoynes 2000), particularly given the work-first nature of many welfare reforms, which rely heavily on local labor markets' ability to absorb welfare recipients. Against this policy background, it has become increasingly important to understand the relationship between local labor demand and various labor and welfare use outcomes among welfare recipients.

Studies on this relationship show the importance of local demand-side factors for the duration of welfare spells and recidivism rates (Hoynes 2000) and for the welfare/employment combination (welfare only, employed while on welfare, employed only, not employed and not on welfare; Herbst and Stevens 2010). Furthermore, a few of the long-term studies reviewed earlier also included a measure of the local economic conditions, and these have yielded mixed findings. Wood and colleagues (2008) found that a higher county unemployment rate was not associated with achieving any of the four economic benchmarks, that is, welfare exit, employment, poverty exit, and overall economic progress (i.e., achieving all the first three), but was associated with sustaining the two benchmarks of employment and welfare exit after they were achieved. By contrast, Wu and colleagues (2008) found no evidence that the county unemployment rate affected the employment success or the earnings success of the women in the study. Rucker Johnson and Mary Corcoran (2003) found that an increase in the local unemployment rate lessened the probability of making a transition to a good job. However, none of these studies examine the effect of the local economic conditions on the specific employment and earnings patterns of welfare recipients.

In the Israeli case, little is known about the experiences of former and current welfare recipients in the labor market. National data indicate a sharp caseload decline in the years following the reform, from a peak of around 150,000 in 2002 to 120,000 in 2007 (a 20 percent decrease), and then a further fall to around 100,000 in 2012 (a 33 percent decrease). This change also characterized single mothers' dependence rate, as their proportion declined from nearly a third of ISB recipients in 2003 to around a quarter in 2007 (National Insurance Institute 2002–3, 2008, 2013). Similar to what happened following welfare reform in other Western countries, when the reform was implemented, welfare use declined and employment and earnings increased among single mothers who received ISB (e.g., Cancian et al. 2003; Acs and Loprest 2004, 2007; Blank 2006; Shannon 2009; Finn and Gloster 2010). In 2007, half of these mothers were no longer on welfare, and the employment rate grew by 13.9 percentage points (from 43.8 percent in 2002 to 57.7 percent in 2007). Average earnings at constant prices grew considerably, from NIS 2,293 in 2003 to NIS 3,201 in 2007, a real growth of 39.5 percent (from 66 percent to 89.3 percent of the monthly minimum wage). However, despite a significant growth in labor income, these figures indicate the high incidence of part-time and low-wage jobs among these mothers (Achdut

2011). Few studies examine the determinants of employment, earnings, and welfare exit at a single point in time (Achdut 2007, 2011, 2016). In general, these studies indicate that older age, family constraints, and health limitations reduced the likelihood of employment and the level of earnings, as did the lack of recent work experience and training. The rate of disconnected mothers is lower in Israel (around 10 percent) than in the United States (20–30 percent), while the rate for combined work and welfare is higher, probably due to policy differences, as explained earlier (Achdut 2016). However, none of these studies examine the long-term labor patterns of welfare recipients and the factors associated with those patterns.

CONTRIBUTION TO THE LITERATURE

This study aims to identify and explain the long-term employment and earnings patterns of welfare recipients following a major policy change in Israel. Its contribution goes beyond the uniqueness of the Israeli context; these long-term patterns and the role of local economic conditions in explaining them have not received much attention in the post-reform US literature. Pre-reform studies (e.g., Harris 1993; Fitzgerald 1995; Hoynes 2000; Fitzgerald and Ribar 2004; Hofferth et al. 2005) and post-reform studies (e.g., Nam 2005; Wood et al. 2008; Herbst and Stevens 2010; Kim 2010, 2012; Moore, Wood, and Rangarajan 2012) that include a measure of the economic conditions (state- or county-level indicators) focus on different aspects of welfare use and employment, welfare exit route, and disconnectedness. Very little is known, even in the US context, about long-term patterns among welfare recipients, particularly about their relation with local economic conditions. Furthermore, the few post-reform long-term studies that do track the progress or welfare of recipients in the labor market yield mixed findings for the effect of the local economic conditions (Wu et al. [2008] as opposed to Wood et al. [2008]). This topic requires further investigation inside and outside the US context. Moreover, our study offers a more accurate measure of economic conditions. Earlier studies in the United States are based on state-level data, which do not reflect local labor market heterogeneity within the state, or are limited to specific states and therefore are unable to provide a more general account of the effect of labor market conditions given different policy constellations that might interact with local economic conditions. Against this background, this study expands our limited knowledge of the long-term labor patterns of welfare recipients, but it

also provides a more accurate measure of the effect of the local labor market on these patterns. Here the contribution is threefold. First, the study was conducted in the context of a national uniform welfare reform, so there was no possible interaction of local policy (i.e., policy variables) and economic conditions. Second, it is based on national administrative data, thereby overcoming regional differences in caseload characteristics and allowing greater variation in local labor market conditions. Third, by merging administrative data with detailed geographic information on labor market conditions and employing a multilevel approach, it provides substantially improved estimates of the effects of economic conditions on long-term patterns of employment and earnings.

METHOD

RESEARCH POPULATION AND DATA SOURCES

The research population is all single mothers who received ISB in 2002, just before the time of the legislative changes. Two sources of administrative data were obtained from the NII: the income support file and the salary file, both for 2000–2007. The former contains sociodemographic information on recipients, locality of residence, previous employment (cumulative months of employment in 2000–2001), work test obligation, and history of welfare dependence (cumulative months of welfare receipt in 2000–2001). The latter file provides information on annual earnings and monthly employment status. An additional data source, obtained from the Central Bureau of Statistics, contains local labor market indicators for about 216 localities in Israel. Among these indicators are the rate of job-seekers out of the working-age population at a given locality and the rate of employees who earned up to the monthly minimum wage. The former indicator reflects the rate of job-seekers as reported by the local employment service and is used as an alternative indicator of the regional unemployment rate. The three sources were merged into one data set containing individual-level variables (personal characteristics, including life events) and macro-level indicators of the local labor market in the place of residence. The income support file, containing information about 45,970 single mothers, was the basis for defining the research population. 873 (1.9 percent) cases for whom there was no information on the local labor market indicators were excluded. The final data set consists of information about 45,097 mothers.

CONCEPTUAL APPROACH

Relying on the three principles posited by Wu and colleagues (2008) that refer to the level of success, the trend, and its stability over time, we further developed a conceptual framework to categorize long-term employment and earnings patterns using monthly data on employment and annual data on earnings. Our approach rests on the following principles: the level of success, the trend and the stability of the trend over the 6-year follow-up, and a sensitivity measure to short-term deviation from the overall trend. First, we compared the final level of employment and earnings for the study's final year (2007) with the levels for the starting year (2002). Second, we took into account the trend over all the 6 years to measure changes (and their direction) or stability. Third, we smoothed the measure so that short-term changes deviating from the overall trend would not affect the entire trajectory. Using this approach, we formulated definitions for employment and earnings patterns.

Employment Pattern

To construct the employment patterns, we counted the number of months worked each year. We regard "change" as the first time a 3-month change in time worked occurred from the starting state, and we noted the stability of this first change over time. For example, the first year that a mother increased or decreased her time spent working for at least 3 months, we compared the number of months she worked during that time of increase or decrease to the initial number of months she worked in 2002. We find six employment patterns: (i) *stable high employment*: the mother worked 10–12 months in each year, (ii) *stable low employment*: the mother worked 3 months or fewer each year, (iii) *stable increase*: we recorded the first year a mother increased her annual employment by at least 3 months more than in the starting year; mothers who maintained a stable increase for the rest of the follow-up period or further increased their employment, but never decreased it were defined as conforming to the stable-increase pattern, (iv) *stable decrease*: we recorded the first year a mother reduced her annual employment by at least 3 months fewer than in the starting year; mothers who maintained this first change through the rest of the follow-up period or further decreased, but never increased, their employment were classified as conforming to the stable-decrease pattern, (v) *unstable positive*:

mothers who showed an unstable trend throughout the follow-up period, increasing in some years and decreasing in others, but who were employed at least 3 months more in 2007 than in 2002; mothers who worked 10–12 months in 2002 and in 2007 but showed instability in the intervening years were also classified under this pattern, and (vi) *unstable negative*: mothers who showed an unstable trend throughout the follow-up period, increasing in some years and decreasing in others, but who were employed 3 or more months fewer in 2007 than in 2002, or worked an equal number of months in both those years.

Because we wish to highlight the final level of employment in 2007, we distinguish between the unstable positive and the unstable negative patterns (see the appendix for alternative methods tested for categorization of employment and earnings patterns).

Earnings Patterns

Using the following criteria, we created six earnings patterns. We computed the average monthly earnings for each year, expressed as a percentage of the monthly minimum wage (MMW),⁸ and we then categorized average monthly earnings as a percentage of that year's MMW: (i) up to 40 percent; (ii) 41–55 percent; (iii) 56–70 percent; (iv) 71–85 percent; (v) 86 percent and above. We recorded the first year a mother's average monthly wage moved from one category into another and then examined the stability of this first change over time. We identified six earnings patterns: (i) *stable high earnings*: monthly average above 70 percent of the MMW for each year, (ii) *stable low earnings*: monthly average below 40 percent of the MMW for each year, (iii) *stable increase*: mothers who moved into a higher category from one year to the next, as against the average monthly earnings for the starting year (changes within the same category were not counted as change) and maintained that increase throughout the follow-up period or showed an additional increase, (iv) *stable decrease*: mothers who moved into a lower category from one year to the next, as against the average monthly earnings in 2002 and maintained that decrease throughout the follow-up period or showed an additional decrease, (v) *unstable positive*: mothers who showed an unstable trend throughout the follow-up period, but were in a higher category in 2007 than in 2002 or the earnings in both 2002 and 2007 were in

8. To demonstrate the earnings level, we took the monthly minimum wage for a full-time job as a benchmark.

the highest category, and (vi) *unstable negative*: mothers who showed an unstable trend throughout the follow-up period and were in a lower category in 2007 than in 2002 or whose earnings in both 2002 and 2007 were in the same category but that category was not the highest.

MEASUREMENT

Table 1 summarizes the demographic and other characteristics of the mothers and the labor marker characteristics of their localities. In the baseline measures, 64 percent of the single mothers were divorced, 21 percent were

TABLE 1. Demographic and Local Labor Market Characteristics, 2002–7

	Mean	SD	%
Level 1. Baseline characteristics (2002):			
Never married mother (= 1)			20.7
Divorced			64.3
Separated			10.6
Widowed			4.4
Age	36.59	8.48	
Up to 25			10.7
26–35			35.0
36–45			37.1
46–54			17.2
Number of children	1.96	1.33	
1			47.8
2			28.5
3			12.5
4 and above			12.2
Age of youngest child	8.0	5.8	
0–3			29.6
Immigrant (= 1)	53.1		
Months of employment 2000–2001 (0–24)	9.30	9.45	
Months of receiving IS8 2000–2001 (0–24)	15.40	9.81	
Exemption from work test due to own or child’s health problem (= 1)			11.0
Time-varying variables (2002–7)			
Birth of a child (= 1)			15.5
Decrease in eligible children (= 1)			37.5
Marriage (= 1)			2.1
Level 2. Local labor market indicator:			
Rate of job-seekers in locality	4.77	1.92	
Rate of employees earning up to the minimum wage in locality	45.76	5.0	
Time-varying variables (2002–7)			
Rate of job-seekers in locality, % change between 2002 and 2007	–11.02	16.48	
Rate of employees earning up to the minimum wage in locality, % change between 2002 and 2007	–6.68	3.44	

Note.—N = 45,097. The calculation of the percentage change in the rate of job-seekers in locality was as follows: (rate of job-seekers in 2007 – rate of job-seekers in 2002)/(rate of job-seekers in 2002) × 100. The calculation of the percentage change in the rate of employees earning up to the minimum wage in locality was as follows: (rate of minimum wage earners in 2007 – rate of minimum wage earners in 2002)/(rate of minimum wage earners in 2002) × 100.

never married, 10 percent were separated, and about 4 percent were widowed. Most mothers were aged 26–45 years, with relatively few very young mothers. About 75 percent of the single mothers had only one or two children, and 30 percent had a child aged 0–3. More than half of the single mothers in ISP were immigrants (most of them from the former Soviet Union), as compared with about 22 percent in the general population of single mothers. Average months of work in the 2 years preceding the policy change was 9.3, indicating that many mothers did not work at all or worked part of the time during this period. The duration of entitlement was quite high; ISBs were received on average for 15.4 months out of the full 24-month duration. Eleven percent of the mothers were exempt from the work test due to their own or their child's health problems.⁹ During the follow-up period, 15.5 percent of the mothers gave birth, 37.5 percent experienced a decrease in the number of eligible children, and only 2.1 percent got married (table 1). The average rate of unemployment (job seeking) was 4.77 percent, and on average 45.8 percent of the residents earned up to the minimum wage.

DATA ANALYSIS

First, we present descriptive statistics on the level of employment and earnings over the 72-month follow-up (2002–7) and changes in employment from one year to the next. Second, we present the prevalence of each employment and earnings pattern, as described in the previous section, for the study population. Third, using a method of multi-level analysis called Hierarchical Linear Modeling (HLM) and nonlinear modeling, we estimated a multinomial logistic regression model to examine factors associated with these patterns. An advantage of using HLM is that we can simultaneously model the effects of labor market characteristics on the odds of having a specific work or earning pattern while controlling for individual-level characteristics (Bryk and Raudenbush 1992). In this sense, we can account for variation in work and earning patterns within as well as between different labor markets.

9. This figure does not reflect the rate of those suffering from health problems, as some of them probably worked, but the rate of mothers not working and exempt from the work test due to their state of health. In a representative sample of the study population, about 20 percent of the mothers reported a chronic health condition that limited their ability to work.

The two-level model incorporates individual-level characteristics on the first level and local labor market indicators on the second level. To allow variation in individual-level variables across localities, only localities with at least 20 observations were included in both the employment and the earnings models.¹⁰

On the individual level, we measure each explanatory variable for the baseline year (2002), including information on past employment and welfare use in the 2 years preceding the study period (2000–2001). We also indicate whether any of the following three changes occurred from the beginning (2002) to the end (2007) of the follow-up period: whether the woman gave birth to an additional child, whether the number of eligible children declined (both reflect a change in the number of eligible children and should affect the benefit level), and whether the mother got married. These events were introduced as three dummy variables indicating the occurrence of each (= 1) during our follow-up. In this way, we account for possible changes in individual characteristics. On the locality level, we use measures at the baseline year (2002) along with a measure of percentage change between 2002 and 2007 in the two local labor market indicators: rate of job-seekers and rate of employees with earnings up to the monthly minimum wage (see the bottom of table 1 for a calculation of these variables). Because our approach considers patterns of employment and earnings through the entire period, we cannot account for year-to-year changes in each variable. Wu and colleagues (2008) also take this approach and include only baseline measures of the independent variables (with no measure of change).

In our multivariate analyses, we combined the *stable increase* pattern with the *unstable positive* pattern and the *stable decrease* pattern (a relatively small group) with the *unstable negative pattern*. Preliminary analysis showed that these groups did not differ significantly on most characteristics.

FINDINGS

LEVELS OF EMPLOYMENT AND EARNINGS

The employment rate steadily increased throughout the study period, from about 40 percent in January 2002 to nearly 50 percent by January 2005, and then to 56 percent by the end of 2007. Sixteen percent of the

10. The number of observations excluded was 543 (1.2 percent); these observations were of mothers living in 68 different localities. The final number of localities in both models is 116.

mothers did not work at all throughout the study period, and only an average of 39 percent worked 10 months or more per year, indicating substantial levels of unemployment. Year-to-year changes in the number of months of employment are displayed in figure 1, which shows the high level of change: about half of the mothers increased or decreased the number of months in which they were employed from one year to the next, with a higher proportion experiencing an increase than a decrease. More than half showed a stable pattern, which could reflect strong or weak labor force attachment.

Like employment, earnings rose steadily over time. Among those who incurred earnings in 2002, the median monthly sum was NIS 1,968 (at 2007 prices; 54 percent of the MMW in 2002). By 2004, the median monthly earnings had risen to NIS 2,029 (58 percent of the MMW in 2004), and then by 2007 to NIS 2,376 (66 percent of the MMW that year). Although the overall trend indicates a positive progression, many mothers showed very low earnings during the 6-year follow-up. Average annual earnings are displayed in figure 2. Despite a substantial decrease in the proportion of mothers with no earnings over the years, the proportion of mothers with very low earnings (up to 40 percent of the MMW) decreased only slightly, from 18 percent in 2002 to 15 percent in 2007. The proportion of those with earnings from 41 percent to 85 percent of the MMW remained similar over the years (about a quarter), while the proportion with earnings above 85 per-

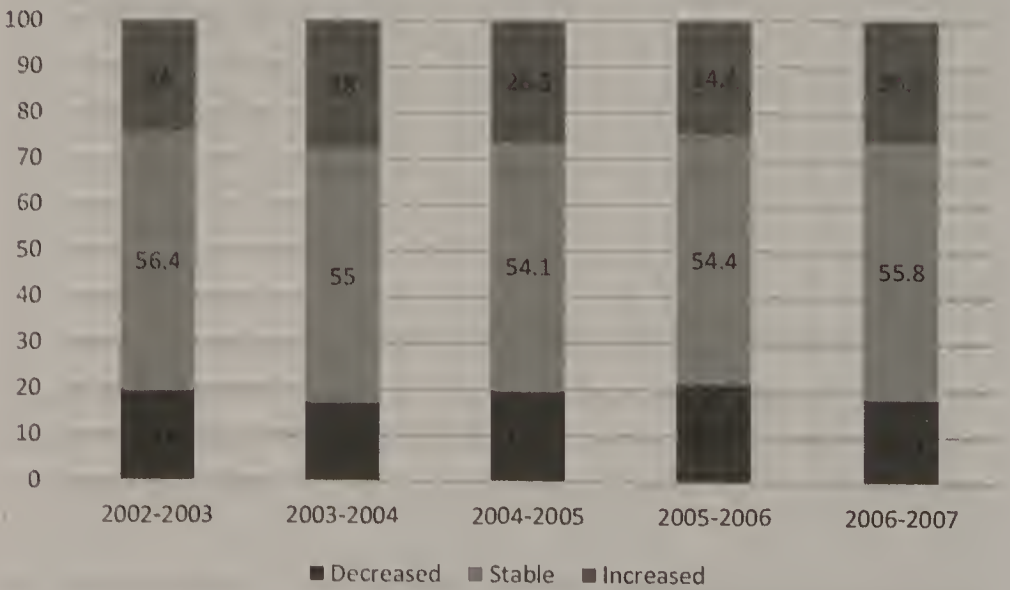


FIGURE 1. Year-to-year trend in employment

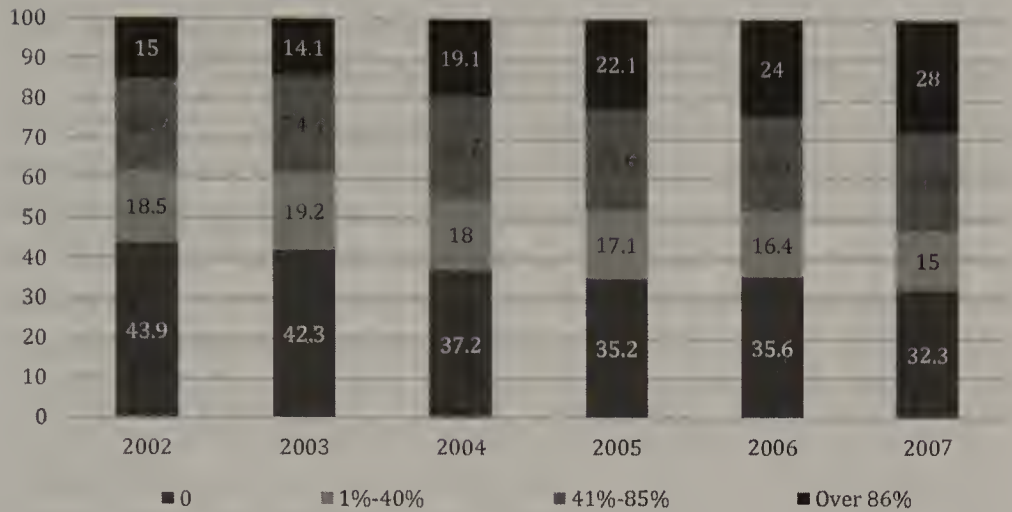


FIGURE 2. Average monthly earnings by year

cent of the MMW rose steeply from 15 percent in the starting year to 28 percent in the final year.

LONG-TERM EMPLOYMENT AND EARNINGS PATTERNS

The top part of table 2 shows the proportion of mothers who exhibited each employment pattern. The most common pattern, exhibited by 40 percent of mothers, was unstable employment. Twenty-four percent exhibited the positive unstable pattern, and 16 percent exhibited the negative unstable pattern. Only a few mothers consistently decreased their employment (7 percent), while 17.7 percent continuously increased their employment.

TABLE 2. Employment and Earnings Patterns

	Proportion
Employment patterns:	
Stable high employment	13.6
Stable low employment	22.0
Stable increase employment	17.7
Stable decrease employment	7.0
Unstable employment with positive ending	24.2
Unstable employment with negative ending	15.6
Earnings patterns:	
Stable high earnings	8.3
Stable low earnings	28.9
Stable increase earnings	18.3
Stable decrease earnings	5.7
Unstable earnings with positive ending	18.8
Unstable earnings with negative ending	20.1

About a fifth of the mothers had a stable pattern of low employment, while only 13.6 percent had a stable pattern of high employment.

The bottom part of table 2 shows the proportion of mothers who exhibited each earnings pattern. The most common pattern is stable low earnings. Twenty-nine percent of the mothers had earnings not exceeding 40 percent of the MMW for the given year throughout the follow-up period. This finding reflects the high incidence of continuous, extremely low earnings of welfare recipients. About 37 percent experienced earnings improvement over the 6 years (18.3 percent stably increased their earnings and 18.8 percent showed an unstable pattern that ended positively) and 26 percent stably decreased their earnings or ended with no advancement. Only 8.3 percent conformed to the stable high pattern; these mothers stably earning above 70 percent of the MMW each year.

Table 3 shows the results of a multinomial logistic regression model predicting employment patterns. Here we estimated the probability of a mother having stable low employment, increasing employment (including an unstable pattern with a positive ending), or decreasing employment (including an unstable pattern with a negative ending) relative to the probability of her having stable high employment. As for individual-level characteristics, having older children, being an immigrant, having more work experience, and not having any health problems decreased the probability of exhibiting the stable low, decrease, or increase patterns compared with the probability of exhibiting the stable high pattern.

Older mothers were more likely to show a stable low pattern ($b = .029$) and less likely to show a decrease ($b = -.022$) or increase ($b = -.027$) pattern than a stable high pattern. This suggests that older mothers tended to exhibit more stable employment patterns, whether high or low. Contrary to expectations, mothers with more children and with longer duration on welfare were less likely to exhibit the stable low, decrease, and increase patterns than the stable high pattern. These findings might reflect the uniqueness of Israeli policy, which did not include a specific work requirement in terms of working hours, either before or after the welfare reform. That is, recipients can maintain a high level of employment and at the same time remain on welfare because of their low earnings. In that case, a longer period of welfare use might indicate other barriers that limit the scope of employment and not employment itself.

The earnings pattern model presented in table 4 supports this explanation, as we show later. Furthermore, experiencing any of the three life

TABLE 3. Multinomial Regression: Prediction of Long-Term Employment Patterns

	Stable Low ^a		Stable Decrease and Unstable Negative ^b		Stable Increase and Unstable Positive ^c	
	<i>b</i>	Odds Ratio	<i>b</i>	Odds Ratio	<i>b</i>	Odds Ratio
Level 1. Personal characteristics:						
Never married mother ^d (= 1)	.286** (.057)	1.33	.006 (.005)	1.006	.032 (.047)	1.032
Age	.029** (.003)	1.03	-.022** (.003)	.977	-.027** (.002)	.972
Number of children	-.045* (.023)	.955	-.108** (.022)	.897	-.083** (.021)	.919
Age of youngest child	-.034** (.006)	.965	-.018** (.005)	.981	-.041** (.004)	.959
Immigrant (= 1)	-1.38** (.047)	.251	-.611** (.040)	.542	-.398** (.038)	.671
Months of employment 2000–2001 (0–24)	-.272** (.003)	.761	.096** -(.002)	.907	-.118** (.002)	.888
Months of receiving IS8 2000–2001 (0–24)	-.021** (.002)	.979	-.020** (.001)	.980	-.019** (.001)	.980
Exemption from work test due to own or child's health problem (= 1)	.908** (.069)	2.48	.245** (.064)	1.278	.214** (.061)	1.239
Birth of a child (= 1)	2.00** (.092)	7.46	1.62** (.087)	5.05	1.23** (.086)	3.45
Decrease in number of eligible children (= 1)	.310** (.059)	1.36	.219** (.050)	1.245	.210** (.047)	1.233
Marriage (= 1)	1.59** (.494)	4.90	1.38** (.484)	4.00	.648 (.488)	1.912
Level 2. Local labor market indicator:						
Rate of job-seekers in locality	.164** (.028)	1.18	.045* (.020)	1.046	.050* (.021)	1.051
Rate of employees earning up to the minimum wage in locality	.042** (.010)	1.04	.007 (.007)	1.007	.005 (.007)	1.005
Rate of job seekers in locality, % change between 2002 and 2007	.009** (.002)	1.009	.003 (.001)	1.003	-.002 (.001)	.997
Rate of employees earning up to minimum wage in locality, % change between 2002 and 2007	-.014 (.011)	.985	.009 (.008)	.990	-.006 (.008)	.993
Intercept	.044** (.452)	1.04	3.11** (.331)	22.61**	4.21** (.335)	67.73

Note.—Reference group is stable high employment (13.6%). Standard errors are in parentheses.

^a Low employment (22%).

^b Stable decrease and unstable negative (22.5%).

^c Stable increase and unstable positive (41.9%).

^d Reference group consisting of divorced, separated, and widowed mothers.

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

events, namely, the birth of a child, a decrease in the number of eligible children, and marriage, increases the probability of exhibiting the stable low, decrease, and increase patterns over the probability of confirming the stable high pattern. As expected, having a baby interrupts the continuity of employment. Marrying is associated with low employment or changes in employment in both directions (increase/decrease). This could be because marriage might ease family demands, making it possible for a mother to work more or, alternatively, it might reduce the incentive or the need to work (or to work as much) as someone else provides for the family. However, preliminary analysis shows that getting married is consistently associated with the stable low pattern or the stable decrease pattern (comparison not shown).

Regarding the role of local labor market conditions, the results show that higher unemployment in the locality heightens the probability of a mother conforming to the stable low ($b = .164$), decrease ($b = .045$), and increase ($b = .050$) patterns over the probability of her conforming to the stable high pattern. A higher rate of minimum wage earners in the locality ($b = .042$) and a relative rise in unemployment (or a more modest decline) during the period ($b = .009$) are associated with greater likelihood of exhibiting a stable low pattern than a stable high pattern (see col. 2 of table 3). However, these two latter factors do not distinguish the increase or decrease patterns from the stable high pattern (see cols. 4 and 6 of table 3). These findings highlight the role of local conditions in determining long-term employment trajectories and reinforce previous evidence on the importance of these factors for welfare recipients (Hoynes 2000; Herbst and Stevens 2010).

Table 4 shows the results of a multinomial logistic regression model predicting earnings patterns. Here we estimate the probability of a mother having stable low earnings, increasing earnings (including an unstable pattern with a positive ending), or decreasing earnings (including an unstable pattern with a negative ending), compared with the probability of her having stable high earnings.

Older mothers, mothers with younger children, mothers with health problems, mothers who gave birth, and women who married during the period were more likely to conform to stable low, decrease, or increase earnings patterns than to exhibit a stable high earnings pattern. By contrast, being an immigrant and having a richer employment experience lowered the probability of matching stable low, decreased, and increased patterns,

TABLE 4. Multinomial Logistic Regression: Prediction of Long-Term Earnings Patterns

	Stable Low ^a		Stable Decrease and Unstable Negative ^b		Stable Increase and Unstable Positive ^c	
	<i>b</i>	Odds Ratio	<i>b</i>	Odds Ratio	<i>b</i>	Odds Ratio
Level 1. Personal characteristics:						
Never married mother (= 1) ^d	.272** (.063)	1.312	.099 (.058)	1.104	.030 (.057)	1.031
Age	.092** (.004)	1.096	.035** (.003)	1.035	.011** (.003)	1.011
Number of children	-.039 (.028)	.961	-.075** (.027)	.927	-.049 (.027)	.951
Age of youngest child	-.093** (.006)	.911	-.069** (.006)	.936	-.088** (.006)	.915
Immigrant (= 1)	-.961** (.051)	.382	-.428** (.047)	.651	-.246** (.046)	.781
Months of employment 2000–2001 (0–24)	-.230** (.003)	.794	-.096** (.003)	.908	-.122** (.002)	.884
Months of receiving ISB 2000–2001 (0–24)	.015** (.002)	1.015	.000 (.002)	1.000	.075** (.002)	1.075
Exemption from work test due to own or child's health problem (= 1)	1.463** (.095)	4.321	.716** (.093)	2.046	.922** (.092)	2.514
Birth of a child (= 1)	1.532** (.097)	4.630	1.19** (.094)	3.305	.712** (.094)	2.038
Decrease in number of eligible children (= 1)	.113 (.064)	1.119	.077 (.058)	1.080	.109 (.057)	1.116
Marriage (= 1)	1.638** (.613)	5.147	1.212* (.607)	3.362	.473* (.614)	1.605
Level 2. Local labor market indicator:						
Rate of job-seekers in locality	.290** (.036)	1.336	.152** (.028)	1.165	.175** (.027)	1.191
Rate of employees earning up to the minimum wage in locality	.053** (.012)	1.055	.015 (.009)	1.015	.020* (.009)	1.021
Rate of job-seekers in locality, % change between 2002 to 2007	.008* (.003)	1.008	.003 (.002)	1.003	-.005 (.002)	.994
Rate of employees earning up to the minimum wage in locality, % change between 2002 and 2007	.007 (.014)	1.007	.010 (.011)	1.010	.009 (.010)	1.009
Intercept	-2.44** (.542)	.088	1.06* (.542)	2.885	2.03** (.416)	7.874

Note.—Reference group is stable high earnings (8.3%).

^a Low employment (28.1 %).

^b Stable decrease and unstable negative (25.7%).

^c Stable increase and unstable positive (37.1%).

^d Reference group consisting of divorced, separated, and widowed mothers

* $p < .05$.

** $P < .01$.

compared with the probability of matching the stable high earnings pattern. Mothers who, prior to the policy reform, had received welfare for longer stretches of time were more likely to exhibit the stable low earnings pattern ($b = .015$) or the increased earnings pattern ($b = .075$) than the stable high earnings pattern. However, longer periods of welfare use did not distinguish the decrease-unstable negative pattern from the stable high pattern.¹¹

Regarding the role of the local labor market, higher unemployment in the locality raised the probability of a mother exhibiting the stable low ($b = .290$), decrease ($b = .152$), and increase ($b = .175$) patterns over the probability of her exhibiting the stable high earnings pattern. Furthermore, a higher rate of minimum wage earners in the locality ($b = .053$) and a relative rise in unemployment (or a more modest decline) over time ($b = .008$) also increased the likelihood of exhibiting the stable low pattern as against the stable high pattern (col. 2). A higher rate of minimum wage earners is positively related to exhibiting the increase pattern ($b = .020$) compared with the stable high pattern (see col. 6 of table 4), and a higher unemployment rate and higher rate of minimum wage earners increased the probability of exhibiting stable low earnings pattern rather than any other pattern (not shown).

DISCUSSION

In this article, we document the long-term (6-year) labor market trajectories of single mothers receiving welfare in Israel and examine the associated individual and local labor market characteristics. Our results reveal the importance of looking beyond the average trends, as they tend to overstate the labor market success of welfare recipients. The results highlight the importance of local economic conditions, beyond individual-level factors, to the advancement of welfare recipients in the labor market.

We find substantial diversity in both employment and earnings patterns, with a high proportion of mothers experiencing instability in both. Over

11. Preliminary analysis shows that longer periods of welfare use increased the probability of having a stable decrease pattern as compared to the probability of having a stable high pattern, but this factor does not distinguish the unstable negative pattern from the stable high pattern, making the overall coefficient insignificant.

the 6 years, only 13.6 percent of the mothers had stable high employment, but many improved their labor force attachment: 17.7 percent showed steady improvement, and about a quarter, while experiencing employment instability, ended the period in a stronger position than they were in when the study started. Overall, 55 percent of the mothers had positive employment outcomes, while the remaining 45 percent experienced poor outcomes, with more than a fifth enduring continuous unemployment. The picture emerging from the earnings patterns distribution is more alarming, as a little less than a third of the women had stable low earnings because they worked for very low wages or they were continuously unemployed. Furthermore, about a quarter of the women experienced a decrease in earnings over the study period. These figures indicate that most mothers had no earnings progress at all, with many experiencing an earnings setback. Only a small minority had stable high earnings, and 36 percent experienced some earnings improvement over time. Regarding employment, our descriptive results, compared with those of Wu and colleagues (2008), show a higher rate of recipients who could be characterized as having long-term employment successes (55 percent and 46 percent, respectively). However, compared with other long-term studies (5–6 years), we find a lower rate of mothers who worked continuously: 13.6 percent in our study, as compared to 16 percent (Johnson and Corcoran 2003), 19 percent (Wu et al. 2008), 21 percent (Wood et al. 2008 [this finding relates to the study's last 3 years, not to the entire 6-year follow-up]), and 33 percent (Danziger and Johnson 2004). This may be due to the work test exemption for mothers of very young children in Israel. However, there is also a great diversity in US studies, probably due to diversity in caseload characteristics and in policy components. Furthermore, we find a higher rate of mothers who were continuously unemployed (22 percent) than Danziger and Johnson (2004; 12 percent) and Wu and colleagues (2008; 12 percent) find. However, when considering those who were classified in the low and unstable patterns with negative ending (37 percent), our findings are very similar to those of Johnson and Corcoran (2003), who show that 33 percent of their sample were continuously unemployed or had long and repeating spells of being out of work. To clarify, in all of the studies reviewed, including this one, the most common pattern for welfare recipients is unstable employment with recurrent spells of unemployment. In earnings, the most common pattern in our study and in Wu and colleagues' study (2008) is stable low earnings: 28 percent in both. However, only 22 percent were

classified as experiencing earnings success by Wu and colleagues (2008), as against a much higher rate in our study (around 45 percent). This may also be due to the different definition of the increase term and the use of different earnings cutoffs. This overall picture suggests that, although Israeli policy contains a lesser degree of mandatory measures and provides more social protection, the long-term labor behavior of welfare recipients reflects a substantial improvement in labor force attachment. Furthermore, considering overall employment and earnings patterns, a higher rate of Israeli recipients experienced relative success, compared with what US studies find. Apparently, a sharp decline in the level of benefit and the disregarded income was a strong incentive for increasing work effort. However, like they do in the United States, a high rate of welfare recipients experiences continuous unemployment, unstable employment, and extremely low earnings. Even among those who enjoy earnings improvement, on average, earnings remain below the monthly minimum wage and are insufficient to meet family needs.

One of the main purposes of our study is to examine the role local labor markets play in determining the long-term outcomes and experiences of welfare-dependent mothers. Our findings show that in local labor markets characterized by poor working conditions (low-wage jobs and high unemployment), welfare recipients encounter difficulty in maintaining stable employment or a steady earnings stream. Moreover, any deterioration in work conditions also affects mothers' ability to increase their employment. These findings thus suggest that welfare recipients' long-term employment and earnings outcomes are shaped by supply-side factors but also by local demand-side factors, more especially the regional level of unemployment. These findings are in line with previous studies that focus on welfare spells (Hoynes 2000), on welfare/employment statuses (Herbst and Stevens 2010), and on sustaining long-term employment and welfare exit (Wood et al. 2008). However, they run counter to Wu and colleagues (2008), which finds no association between county unemployment rate and welfare recipients' long-term success. This may be due to the fact that the authors of that study collapsed six patterns into two (success vs. nonsuccess), which precluded a comparison of patterns that reflected different measures of success or setback.

There are several limitations to this study. Absent information on working hours, we are unable to determine whether the increase in earnings is due to an increase in working hours or an increase in the hourly wage, that is, to women working in higher-paying jobs. We are also unable to tell if the

low level of earnings we observe is due to women holding part-time or low-wage jobs, and therefore we cannot determine what group of mothers is most likely to work at a “good job” in terms of working hours and hourly wage. Another missing variable in our data set is formal education. Although previous studies produce mixed evidence about the role of formal education in explaining welfare use and employment outcomes (see Achdut [2016] for a review of findings), evidence relating to earnings consistently indicates the importance of education (e.g., Cancian et al. 2003; Johnson and Corcoran 2003; Dworsky and Courtney 2007; Wu et al. 2008). However, the longitudinal information included in the models—previous employment and welfare use—most likely reflects heterogeneity in education. Finally, because our approach considers patterns covering a multi-year period, in our multivariate analyses we could not account for year-to-year changes in time-varying variables, at both the personal and the labor market levels. However, to account for some changes that might have occurred over those years, we incorporated time-varying variables in our models that indicate life events and changes in the economic condition that were expected to affect the outcomes under discussion.

CONCLUSION

This study shows great diversity in employment and earnings patterns of welfare recipients and highlights the important contributions of the local economic conditions to those patterns. Our findings hold even in a less mandatory policy context that provides a greater degree of social protection and thus would be expected to reduce welfare recipients’ dependency on the local economic environment. Although employment and earnings increased substantially in the years following the Israeli reform, even 6 years later many mothers still endured long-term unemployment, unstable employment, and extremely low earnings, with little or no prospects for economic progress. These findings underscore previous evidence on the difficulties faced by current and former welfare recipients, even the least disadvantaged among them, in maintaining a steady path toward economic self-sufficiency (e.g., Acs and Loprest 2007; Slack et al. 2007; Wood et al. 2008; Blank and Kovak 2009; Moore et al. 2012).

Our findings suggest the need for additional policy measures to help single mothers receiving welfare. Previous studies have pointed out the benefit

of training programs designed to encourage job retention and advancement (Holzer and Martinson 2005; Johnson 2007; Bloom et al. 2009) and other human capital interventions (e.g., Ochel 2005; Kim 2012) to improve the labor market progress of welfare recipients. Our findings, in turn, emphasize the need to consider differential measures that take local economic conditions into account. Policy makers should consider differential levels of public assistance in terms of cash benefits, disregarded earnings, child-care subsidies, and even differential entry points for tax credit program for women living in high unemployment areas with limited employment opportunities. These demand-side factors should be taken into account when a person's employability is assessed.

Furthermore, and more generally, the diversity arising from our findings reinforces the perception that there is no single solution to the issue of welfare recipients' economic well-being, particularly that of single-parent households. All these mothers need some form of public assistance. Those with greater employability might do better in the labor market if Israel had something akin to the Earned Income Tax Credit, subsidized childcare for young children, and after-school arrangements for older children. Such policy measures might allow single mothers to access full-time employment and might to some extent reduce in-work poverty—although there is no guarantee that jobs would be available. However, many of these policy measures are only a partial solution for mothers with lower employability, as these mothers lack the ability to overcome barriers of low education, lack of work experience, old age, health problems, prolonged stays in welfare, and a low level of demand in local labor markets. For these single mothers, a decent cash benefit system is required.

APPENDIX

Based on the three principles that guided us in determining long-term patterns, we considered alternative measures for both employment and earnings. With respect to employment, two measures were tested. First, we applied the same definition that appears in the article but defined a year-to-year change as 2 months' difference (positive or negative) occurring in 2 consecutive years. Second, we considered the number of months of employment and divided each year into three categories, low (0–3 months), mid (4–9 months), and high (10–12 months), and then defined a change as moving upward/downward across categories for 2 consecutive years. In both definitions,

the stable low pattern and the stable high pattern were as presented in the article (stable low: worked 0–3 months at each year; stable high: worked 10–12 months each year). Results based on these definitions show minor changes in the proportion of the four in-between patterns (increase, unstable positive, decrease, unstable negative), with a higher proportion of the unstable positive pattern than of the stable increase pattern when applying the “2 months’ change” criterion and a lower proportion when applying the “categorical change” criterion. Accordingly, the multivariate analysis based on these alternative measures yielded similar findings, with a few exceptions on the personal level, and no differences in the findings for the local labor market indicators.

With respect to earnings, we examined the cutoff points in our measure of increasing (or decreasing) earnings. We required an annual increase of at least 15 percent of the monthly minimum wage (MMW) in a given year, with the exception of the lowest category (0–40 percent of the MMW), because we wanted to identify those who had continuous very low earnings. If we required a substantial increase of 20 percent of the MMW, the proportion of each pattern remained almost identical. If we imposed a differential increase term, taking into account that it is harder to increase earnings from a higher earnings than from lower earnings, the proportion of the four in-between patterns (increase, unstable positive, decrease, unstable negative) changed only slightly. We tested the following cutoff for annual earnings: 0–40 percent, 41–70 percent, 71–85 percent, and 86 percent and above of the MMW. Here the stable increase rose from 18.3 percent to 19.7 percent, the unstable positive fell from 18.8 percent to 16.2 percent, the decrease remained the same, and the unstable negative rose from 20.1 percent to 21.5 percent. We also examined our results according to the following annual cutoff: 0–30 percent, 31–70 percent, 71–85 percent, and 86 percent and above of the MMW. Here we limited the lowest category to those who had earnings of up to 30 percent of the MMW. As expected, this definition reduced the proportion of the stable low pattern (from 28.9 percent to 23.2 percent) and increased the proportion of the unstable negative pattern (from 20.1 percent to 25.2 percent). However, the proportion of the stable high pattern, the stable increase, the unstable positive and the stable decrease changed only slightly. Regardless of the definition used, our multivariate analysis yielded similar results with respect to the local labor market indicator and minor differences in respect to the mothers’ personal characteristics.

NOTE

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Testing Universal Child Development Accounts: Financial Effects in a Large Social Experiment

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ABSTRACT This article examines the financial effects of Child Development Accounts (CDAs) designed to build assets for every newborn. Data come from a randomized experiment with probability sampling from a full state population 7 years after the intervention began. As expected, the CDA has a large effect on asset accumulation for college, primarily because of the automatic initial deposit and subsequent investment earnings. Automatic program deposits are likely to enable low- and moderate-income families to accumulate assets for college. Because of the potential for market growth, deposits made early in a child's life and held in an investment vehicle are likely to have the greatest influence. These findings and policy implications are important because growing up with designated college savings likely shapes children's educational expectations, which in turn likely shape academic behavior and achievement. Moreover, demonstrating full inclusion—accounts and assets for all newborns—sets the stage for widespread participation in asset building and more equitable distribution of public resources.

INTRODUCTION

The past 25 years have witnessed a change in thinking about well-being. Income (as a proxy for consumption) is no longer the sole metric of well-being, even of economic well-being. Amartya Sen and others have articu-

lated the value of capabilities (i.e., “the freedom that a person has to lead one kind of life or another” [Sen 1993, 3]). Over a similar time period, scholars, policy makers, and others have come to recognize the importance of assets, both financial and tangible (Sherraden 1991, 2014; see also Oliver and Shapiro (1995) 2006; Shapiro 2004; McKernan and Sherraden 2008; Cramer and William Shanks 2014). Assets provide a buffer to income disruptions and enable people to take advantage of opportunities that would be difficult for them to finance out of income alone. For example, savings may be used to purchase a home that gives a family stability or a car or education that opens up new employment possibilities, and asset transfers through gifts and bequests can give a leg up to the next generation (Shapiro 2004). As Vernon Loke and Michael Sherraden (2009) note, “Assets . . . facilitate investments in future aspirations” (119).

Supporting asset accumulation may be viewed as a way of enabling people to expand their capabilities. Being able to invest in one’s skills and capabilities is particularly important in today’s rapidly changing global economy (Sherraden 2014). In addition, evidence suggests that asset holding leads people to be more future-oriented in their attitudes and behaviors and improves a wide variety of outcomes, from parents’ expectations for their children’s education to behavioral problems, cognitive abilities, and educational achievement among children (see reviews in Williams Shanks et al. [2010], Elliott, Destin, and Friedline [2011], and Grinstein-Weiss, Williams Shanks, and Beverly [2014]). Thus, there are good reasons to support asset accumulation, especially for those who are least able to accumulate assets on their own.

In fact, current policy in the United States heavily subsidizes asset accumulation for high-income households but not for low-income households. For example, C. Eugene Steuerle and colleagues (2014) estimate that in 2013, 84 percent of federal expenditures on employer-based retirement savings and individual retirement accounts went to taxpayers in the two highest income quintiles. Taxpayers in the lowest income quintile received less than 1 percent of these subsidies. Meanwhile, means-tested programs with asset limits penalize saving by low-income households. This very lopsided asset policy contributes to extreme asset inequality.¹

1. The distribution of assets is more skewed than the distribution of income. In the United States in 2013, for example, median net worth of upper-income households was 6.6 times that of middle-income households and almost 70 times that of low-income households (Fry and Kochhar 2014).

If all households can benefit from having assets and if asset accumulation is especially difficult for low-income households, then social policy might aim for a universal and progressive asset-building policy. Under a universal policy, everyone participates; under a progressive policy, the poorest households receive the greatest subsidies.

CHILD DEVELOPMENT ACCOUNTS

Child Development Accounts (CDAs) can be viewed as a beginning step toward a universal and progressive asset policy. First proposed by Michael Sherraden (1991; see also Goldberg 2005), CDAs are savings or investment accounts to help people accumulate assets for medium- and long-term developmental goals such as postsecondary education and home purchase. The ultimate goals are to reduce inequality and to give all children the opportunity to benefit from asset accumulation. The policy vision is a national system of universal, progressive, and eventually lifelong accounts. The federal government would automatically open a CDA for every newborn and place an initial deposit of \$500–\$1,000 in each account. Parents, youth, and others would be encouraged to make additional deposits. A progressive savings match or some other progressive component would subsidize deposits for low- and moderate-income children (Sherraden 1991, 2014).

The national governments of Singapore, Canada, Korea, and the United Kingdom have created versions of CDAs (Loke and Sherraden 2009). In the United States, Maine, Nevada, Connecticut, and Rhode Island have statewide CDA programs (Clancy, Sherraden, and Beverly 2015; Clancy and Beverly 2016). Although the United Kingdom's CDA was suspended in 2011 due to budgetary constraints, the overall trend seems to be demonstration and expansion. For example, in 2014, Maine began automatically enrolling all resident newborns in a statewide CDA program, a change that has increased participation from about 40 percent to 100 percent (Clancy and Sherraden 2014). In November 2015, legislation to create automatic and universal college savings accounts for all newborns was introduced in the US House of Representatives (Harvin 2016). In March 2016, Singapore substantially expanded its CDA policy; among the provisions is a new automatic deposit when parents open a special account for preschool, early intervention, and childhood medical expenses.² And Israel is developing a new

2. See http://heybaby.sg/havingchildren/baby_bonus.html.

nationwide CDA policy that plans to automatically open accounts for all newborns born after January 1, 2017.

Most CDA programs around the world support asset accumulation for education. This is especially true in the United States, where the largest CDA programs are built on 529 college savings plans.³ Proponents view CDAs as tools for improving the educational outcomes of disadvantaged youth (Sherraden et al. 2016). Children who grow up with an account and assets designated for future college expenses are expected to be more likely than others to have a “college-bound identity” (Oyserman 2013, 188; see also Elliott, Choi, et al. 2011; Elliott, Destin, et al. 2011). Prior research suggests that children who grow up expecting to go to college are more likely to persist in college and obtain a degree (Ishitani 2006). College accounts and college assets may also influence parents’ attitudes about their children’s education, encouraging parents to support that education. Positive attitudes about education held by children probably influence parental attitudes and vice versa. Research consistently shows that higher educational expectations (whether held by children or their parents) are associated with greater academic achievement (e.g., Beal and Crockett 2010; Elliott and Beverly 2011; Elliott, Destin, et al. 2011).⁴

The influence of a CDA is probably stronger when CDA asset levels are higher. However, CDAs might influence attitudes and behaviors even when asset levels are modest and even when children receive accounts and deposits automatically. As Sondra Beverly, William Elliott, and Michael Sherraden

3. College savings plans (commonly called 529 plans, after the relevant section of the Internal Revenue Code) offer tax-preferred saving through investment accounts. Qualified withdrawals are exempt from federal and state taxes, and most states allow qualified contributions to be deducted from state income taxes (Lassar, Clancy, and McClure 2010).

4. We do not assume that college is the best option for all young adults. Some are better served by training programs offered by certified vocational schools. To our knowledge, all existing CDA policies for postsecondary education support withdrawals for accredited training programs as well as colleges, and in this article the term *college* could be replaced with the phrase *postsecondary education and training*. Also, college is expensive. Under the current college financing and student aid systems, many students graduate—or withdraw—with heavy debt that can reduce their financial well-being (see, e.g., Elliott, Grinstein-Weiss, and Nam 2013a, 2013b, 2013c; Elliott and Nam 2013). CDAs are one tool to help young adults avoid student debt. Also, under the ideal CDA policy, young adults who do not pursue postsecondary education or training could use their CDA funds for other purposes, such as homeownership and small business development.

(2013) suggest, the existence of a program that provides college accounts and assets—especially a federal program for all youth—would send a message that college is expected.⁵ In addition, a policy providing such accounts would give families a designated place to save for college whenever they are able and motivated, thus opening a “channel” that facilitates saving (Bertrand, Mullainathan, and Shafir 2004, 419). Dedicating funds for postsecondary education might make the goal of a college education more salient, and account statements might serve as regular reminders of the importance of saving for education (Gray et al. 2012). For these reasons, having a college savings account and having assets for college are desirable policy objectives even if families do nothing to receive them. The influence of automatically opened CDAs with automatic deposits may be particularly strong for low-income children, who might otherwise view college as unattainable.

SEED FOR OKLAHOMA KIDS

It is common for policy development to get ahead of research, but a rigorous test of CDAs began relatively early, in 2007. SEED for Oklahoma Kids (SEED OK) is a large experiment with probability sampling across a full state population, random assignment, and multiple data sources, including a longitudinal survey and account data transferred electronically from the financial provider.

The primary component of the CDA in SEED OK is an automatically opened college savings account with an automatic initial deposit of \$1,000 given by the SEED OK experiment to every infant in the treatment group. (These accounts are owned by the state of Oklahoma, and treatment children are beneficiaries.) Treatment parents were encouraged to open and save in their own college savings accounts for their young children, and SEED OK provided a time-limited \$100 account-opening incentive. For about 4 years, personal deposits into the accounts of low- and moderate-income children were matched by SEED OK.

Yunju Nam and colleagues (2013) examine the short-term effect of the CDA in SEED OK on several outcomes related to college savings accounts, assets in college accounts (which include SEED OK incentives), and personal savings in college accounts (which do not include SEED OK incen-

5. For evidence that a government program can improve educational outcomes by changing attitudes about the importance of education, see Benhassine et al. (2015).

tives). Outcomes were measured when children were about 2 years old. These researchers find, as expected, that the CDA had a large positive effect on account and asset ownership. (Only one parent opted out of the automatic account and initial deposit for her child, so ownership rates in the treatment group were nearly 100 percent; ownership rates in the control group were very low.) The CDA had a large positive effect on the value of assets in college accounts and a modest positive effect on the value of personal savings held in incentivized college accounts. The authors conclude that a near-universal CDA policy is possible and is greatly facilitated by the use of a centralized savings plan, such as a 529 plan. The authors note that the CDA's effect on ownership of individual accounts may ultimately contribute to better educational outcomes. And they note the importance of assessing the CDA's effect on individual savings after more time has passed because the short-term effect is modest.

Other SEED OK research examines nonfinancial outcomes measured when children were about 4 years old. Experimental evidence indicates that the CDA in SEED OK helps mothers maintain high expectations for their children's education (Kim et al. 2015), reduces symptoms of maternal depression (Huang, Sherraden, and Purnell 2014), and improves the early social-emotional development of children (Huang, Sherraden, Kim, et al. 2014). Often the CDA in SEED OK has positive outcomes regardless of parents' saving behavior, that is, even if parents have not opened and saved in college accounts for their children (Sherraden et al. 2015).

Because the CDA in SEED OK supports asset accumulation for post-secondary education, we are ultimately interested in college enrollment and completion. It will be many years, however, before these outcomes can be assessed. More time is also needed to gather additional data on intermediate outcomes such as parents' attitudes and behaviors and children's attitudes, behaviors, and pre-college academic performance.

In this article, we update and extend the analysis of financial outcomes (see Nam et al. 2013). This knowledge is fundamental for assessing CDAs as an ongoing policy innovation for two important reasons. First, SEED OK is a long-running policy experiment testing a new policy direction, and an update on how the experiment is progressing is warranted. In this regard, all aspects of the accounts and financial holdings represent the fundamental assessment of the policy as it is being put in place, including continuing or increasing account holding, depositing, earnings, and total assets accumulated. Second, these SEED OK results have direct and immediate policy relevance. As one important example, one aspect of this analysis is earnings

on invested assets. As the reader will observe, by using a state college savings plan as a CDA platform, SEED OK gives participants the benefit of investing for long-term returns, with exposure to risk and potential for higher long-term returns, as compared to bank savings accounts. This is of direct and immediate policy relevance because many advocates of child accounts propose using local banks as asset managers. These proposals are well intentioned, but long-term returns on these savings at current bank interest rates are near zero. This article's updated information on financial outcomes in SEED OK is thus critical for informing ongoing CDA policy design, especially as it is now underway in a number of US cities.

In this research, we use SEED OK data that were collected when children were about 7 years old. Measuring outcomes at this point in time is valuable because the school-age period provides many opportunities for parents to support their children's learning and engage with the educational system. It also is an important time for parents to begin communicating academic and educational expectations to their children. College accounts and assets may shape parental attitudes and behaviors, with a positive influence on children's attitudes, behaviors, and academic performance.

In addition, the effects of the CDA on financial outcomes may change over time. Research shows that parents of school-age children (ages 7–12) are more likely to be saving for college than parents of younger children and that parents of school-age and teenage children have substantially more college savings than parents of younger children (Sallie Mae 2014). If more parents in the control group open accounts and save for college as the college years grow closer, the effects of the CDA on account holding, personal savings for college, and college assets may decrease over time. If control children's savings ever caught up with those of treatment children, the rationale for universal and automatic CDAs would be weakened. Meanwhile, the effect of the CDA on the value of college assets may increase because of investment earnings on program deposits, especially the \$1,000 initial deposit in SEED OK.

The effect of the CDA on personal savings also may increase if SEED OK accounts, deposits, information, and incentives raise parents' educational expectations and/or motivate them to prepare early for college expenses. The effect on personal savings may decrease if the motivational effect of the CDA wears off during the first few years. It is worth noting that deposits into the accounts of low- and moderate-income children earned a savings match for about 4 years, which is beyond the time period examined by Nam and colleagues (2013).

What did we expect to find when re-examining these outcomes after 5 more years? First, we expected to find continued large effects on account holding and asset holding. That is, even though parents become more likely to plan and save for college as their children age, we expected that children in the control group would still have very low rates of account and asset ownership. We did not (and do not) expect control children to catch up with treatment children on account holding or asset accumulation. Second, we expected investment earnings to be an important component of the treatment-control difference in the value of college assets. This would provide new evidence about the importance of automatic initial deposits and the effect of investment options beyond savings accounts. Especially because the Great Recession occurred during the early study period, this finding would also provide evidence of the value of holding CDA funds in an account with potential for investment growth.

Third, we expected the CDA to have a modest effect on personal savings. That is, we expected the information and incentives from SEED OK encouraging parents to plan for college expenses to stimulate some saving by treatment families. At the same time, based on previous research, we recognize how difficult saving can be, especially for low-income families and especially when the saving objective is many years in the future (Schreiner and Sherraden 2007; Sherraden and McBride 2010). The incentives in SEED OK may not have been strong enough to stimulate saving for future college expenses, and saving for college may simply be impossible for some families. We expected these challenges to dampen positive responses to SEED OK information and incentives. Finding that the CDA's influence on personal savings is still modest might encourage designers of CDA policy to consider automatic "milestone" deposits, such as funds deposited automatically when a child enters kindergarten and graduates from high school. These deposits, which could be progressive (e.g., available only to children eligible for free or reduced-price lunch), might better support asset accumulation in low- and moderate-income households than a savings match.

METHOD

SAMPLING, DATA, AND RANDOM ASSIGNMENT

The SEED OK experiment randomly selected children via the birth records of all infants born in Oklahoma during two periods in 2007.⁶ African

6. The response rate in the first sampling period, April through June, was lower than expected, so birth records from August through October were also sampled.

American, American Indian, and Hispanic children were oversampled. Mothers of 7,297 infants were invited to participate in the experiment through a letter from the Oklahoma State Treasurer,⁷ but 182 cases were later deemed ineligible. Of the remaining 7,115 mothers, 2,704 completed the baseline telephone survey (a response rate of 38 percent). These mothers and their infants (hereafter, SEED OK children) were then randomly assigned to the treatment group ($n = 1,358$) or the control group ($n = 1,346$; Marks, Rhodes, and Scheffler 2008).⁸

Data for the financial outcomes presented here were transmitted electronically from TIAA, the program manager of Oklahoma's 529 plan. Demographic and socioeconomic characteristics come from birth records (mother's race/ethnicity, education, marital status, and age) and the baseline survey.

Table 1 shows sample characteristics. About two-thirds of the mothers are non-Hispanic white. Over 68 percent of the households had low incomes, and 41 percent received public assistance. Only about one-fifth of the mothers had a college degree, and over one-fifth had less than a high school education. Sixty percent of the mothers were married, 42 percent of the children lived with homeowners, and English was the primary language in 90 percent of the households. The treatment and control groups do not differ significantly ($p < .05$) on any of the characteristics examined.

THE CDA IN SEED OK

As noted above, the primary component of the CDA in SEED OK is an automatically opened college savings account with an automatic initial deposit of \$1,000 (fig. 1). The CDA is built on the Oklahoma 529 College Savings

7. The invitation letter informed mothers that they had a 50/50 chance of receiving a college savings account and \$1,000 initial deposit for their child if they participated in the study. Those who participated provided verbal informed consent before beginning the baseline survey and received \$40 for their time. Although mothers were recruited, in rare circumstances someone other than the mother completed the survey. One father and five nonparental caregivers did so, but for simplicity we refer to all SEED OK caregivers as mothers. Study methods were approved by the Institutional Review Boards of Washington University and RTI International.

8. The sample used by Nam and colleagues (2013) has 34 fewer cases than our sample. They excluded 22 non-Oklahoma residents, 5 primary caregivers who are not parents of SEED OK children, and 7 cases with missing values on independent variables used in multivariate analysis.

TABLE 1. Sample Characteristics (Weighted Percentages)

Characteristic	Full Sample (N = 2,704)	Control (n = 1,346)	Treatment (n = 1,358)
Household income-to-poverty ratio ^a :			
High income	13.2	13.5	12.9
Middle income	18.7	18.4	18.9
Low income	68.2	68.1	68.3
Mother's race/ethnicity:			
Non-Hispanic white	65.3	65.1	65.5
African American	9.0	9.0	8.9
American Indian	11.4	11.4	11.4
Asian	1.3	1.4	1.2
Hispanic	13.0	13.1	13.0
Mother's education:			
Bachelor's degree or more	21.2	21.1	21.2
Some college	18.6	18.7	18.5
High school graduate	38.1	38.1	38.1
Less than high school	22.1	22.1	22.2
Mother's marital status: married	60.0	60.7	59.2
Homeownership: yes	42.0	41.9	42.0
Public assistance receipt: yes ^b	40.9	41.4	40.3
Primary language: English	90.4	90.0	90.9
Household size (mean, SD)	4.2 (1.3)	4.2 (1.3)	4.2 (1.3)
Mother's age (mean, SD)	25.6 (5.6)	25.6 (5.6)	25.6 (5.5)

Note.—Data come from the SEED OK baseline survey and 2007 Oklahoma state birth records and are weighted to be representative of births in Oklahoma in 2007. Percentages may not sum to 100 percent due to rounding. The following variables have missing data: income-to-poverty ratio (missing for 106 cases), mother's education (18), public assistance receipt (9), homeownership (3), and primary language (1). No treatment-control difference is statistically significant at the .05 level.

^a Low income indicates household income below 200% of the federal poverty guideline. Middle income indicates household income between 200% and 399% of the poverty line. High income indicates household income at or above 400% of the line.

^b Public assistance includes benefits from Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, the Food Stamp Program, and either Supplemental Security Income or Social Security Disability Insurance.

Plan (OK 529). The automatically opened OK 529 accounts (hereafter, SEED OK accounts) hold deposits made by SEED OK as part of the CDA program, and the accounts are owned by the state of Oklahoma. Funds in these accounts are invested in the OK 529 Balanced Option, a mix of stocks and bonds. Like funds in other 529 accounts, these funds will be sent directly to postsecondary educational institutions (e.g., in-state and out-of-state institutions, including 4-year colleges, community colleges, and vocational schools).

Personal deposits for future college expenses are kept separate from SEED OK deposits for administrative reasons discussed in Nam and colleagues (2013).⁹ Therefore, in addition to the automatic SEED OK account

9. Under the ideal CDA policy, every child would automatically receive a single account that would hold deposits from all sources. If a single-account structure is not possible, an-

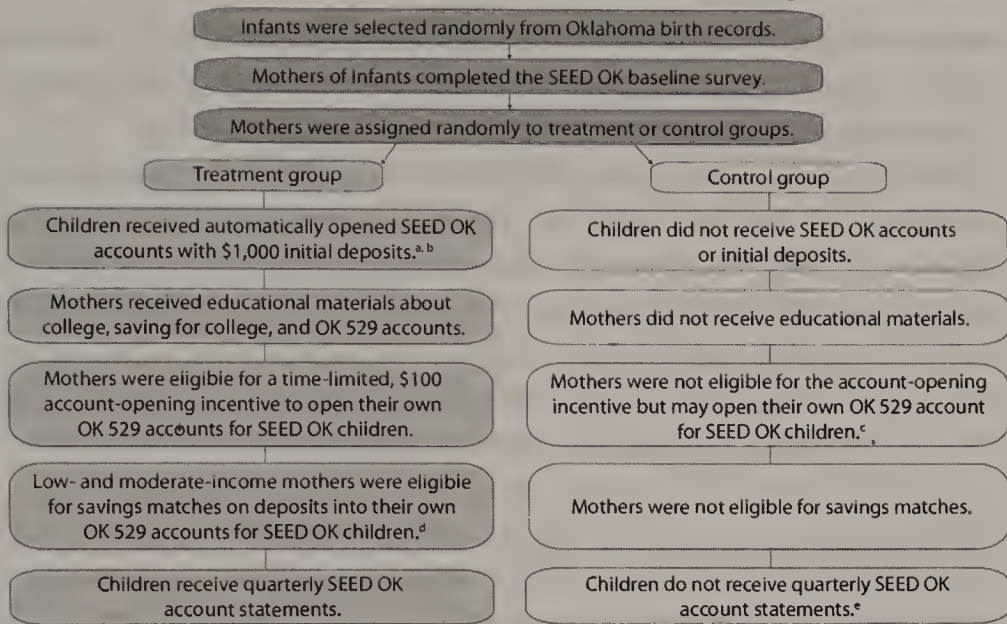


FIGURE 1. SEED for Oklahoma Kids Experiment. Source: Beverly, Clancy, and Sherraden 2014. Reprinted with permission. *a*, one mother opted out of the account for her child for religious reasons; *b*, funds are restricted for postsecondary use and will be sent directly to educational institutions; *c*, anyone 18 years or older, regardless of their state residency, can open an OK 529 account; *d*, savings matches are held in SEED OK accounts; *e*, because they did not receive automatically opened accounts, control children do not receive quarterly SEED OK account statements. A color version is available as an online enhancement.

with initial deposit, the CDA in SEED OK also includes information and incentives to encourage treatment mothers to open and save in their own OK 529 accounts (hereafter, mother-owned accounts). Mothers who opened OK 529 accounts for their young children by April 15, 2009, received a \$100 deposit into their accounts.¹⁰ For about 4 years, low- and moderate-income treatment children received 1:1 or 0.5:1 matches on deposits into mother-owned accounts; match money is held in the SEED OK account.¹¹

To avoid exposing control families to the intervention, SEED OK sent information to treatment mothers by mail. Letters, postcards, and brochures discussed the importance of college and saving for college and

other option is to combine the program deposits for all children, investing them in a restricted portfolio held in a single, omnibus account. Each child could receive a single account statement showing contributions from all sources (Clancy and Sherraden 2014).

10. The plan requires a minimum \$100 initial contribution to open a new OK 529 account, and SEED OK offered the \$100 deposit to remove this potential financial barrier.

11. The state used tax returns and public assistance records to determine savings match eligibility (Zager et al. 2010).

described OK 529 accounts and SEED OK financial incentives. Treatment children continue to receive quarterly statements for SEED OK accounts. These statements come from TIAA.

Mothers in the control group did not receive a SEED OK account with initial deposit. They did not receive information from SEED OK about OK 529 accounts nor did they receive incentives from SEED OK to open and save in these accounts. At the same time, there were no restrictions of any kind on control families. Like any adult, mothers in the control group could and can open an OK 529 account at any time. All owners of OK 529 accounts receive quarterly statements from TIAA.

FINANCIAL OUTCOME MEASURES

As noted above, having a college account and assets early in life may improve educational engagement and achievement even if account opening and asset accumulation are automatic. By design, CDAs are a population-level intervention, not unlike a plumbing system that provides safe and inexpensive water to all or a public transportation system that provides safe and inexpensive transport. In population-level interventions, individual behavior matters, but it is not the only—nor necessarily the most important—factor of interest and influence (Sherraden 2014). The fact that CDAs have positively shaped nonfinancial outcomes regardless of parents' saving behavior further supports the idea of account and asset ownership as explicit policy goals. Thus, the financial outcome measures that we view as important include automatically opened accounts and automatically deposited funds. In addition, SEED OK offered incentives for opening and saving in college accounts, and examining private account-holding and personal savings is also important.

Outcomes were measured on December 31, 2014. Our data provide no information on accounts or assets held outside of OK 529. Because control families were not offered SEED OK incentives to open and save in OK 529 accounts, they may be more likely than treatment families to keep their college savings in a different savings vehicle, such as a general savings account. To the extent that this is true, we overestimate the effects of the CDA on individual account ownership and savings. However, we expect this bias to be fairly small. Most low- and moderate-income families have no or very low amounts of college savings (Sallie Mae 2014). The potential for bias is much greater for high-saving families, but this group seems likely

to save in OK 529 accounts in order to take advantage of the state income tax deduction for OK 529 contributions.¹²

For simplicity, we say that a child holds an account if she or he is the beneficiary, even though the accounts are owned by adults or the state of Oklahoma. Account types include the automatic SEED OK account and the mother-owned account. Because fathers, grandparents, and other adults may open and save in OK 529 accounts for SEED OK children, we also examine other individual accounts. Extending the analysis in Nam and colleagues' work (2013), we combine the mother-owned and other individual accounts to create a fourth account category, all individual accounts combined. Examining treatment-control differences for all individual accounts combined helps to account for the fact that families in the control group did not have SEED OK incentives to open and save in an OK 529 account owned by the mother, so fathers or others may have opened OK 529 accounts for children. Finally, we add in SEED OK accounts to create a fifth category, all accounts combined.

Assets include any funds in these OK 529 accounts. For treatment children, assets include SEED OK deposits (i.e., the \$1,000 initial deposit, the \$100 account-opening deposit, and match money) as well as savings. Savings come from individual deposits to individual OK 529 accounts and do not include SEED OK deposits. Savings are presented as net deposits (deposits minus withdrawals). In an extension of Nam and colleagues' work (2013), our measures of assets and individual savings include investment earnings, and we report earnings separately.¹³

12. Oklahoma residents may deduct up to \$10,000 per year in OK 529 contributions from their income; couples filing jointly may deduct up to \$20,000 before calculating their tax obligations.

13. Because we exclude the \$100 account-opening deposit from our measures of savings, we also exclude an estimate of earnings on that deposit. We assume that all individual deposits were made on the day the \$100 deposit was posted and assign earnings to the \$100 deposit and to personal deposits proportionately. To the extent that personal deposits were made after the \$100 deposit was posted, our assignment of earnings and thus our estimates of individual savings could be biased. This potential estimation bias seems to be very small: for treatment children without any personal deposits ($n = 104$), there is no potential bias in calculations of earnings on the \$100 account-opening deposit. The mean earnings on the \$100 deposit for this group is \$48.01. For treatment children with some personal deposits ($n = 96$), there is some potential bias. However, the mean estimated earnings on the \$100 deposit for this group is almost equivalent, \$48.04.

ANALYTIC STRATEGY

Data are weighted to adjust for oversampling of minority children as well as for observed differences between those who agreed to participate in the study and those who did not (Marks et al. 2008).¹⁴ Because the treatment and control groups were very similar at the time of random assignment, we use simple bivariate analysis to measure the effect of the CDA. When possible, we compare these latest treatment-control differences to the treatment-control differences reported by Nam and colleagues (2013).

RESULTS

The first three columns of tables 2 and 3 show financial outcomes by treatment status and the treatment-control difference at the end of 2014. The last column shows the treatment-control differences reported by Nam and colleagues (2013), with data from June 30, 2009. We first examine what we believe are the most important early financial outcomes in SEED OK: having a college savings account and having assets for college.

ALL OK 529 ACCOUNT HOLDING AND ASSETS

In the control group, very few children have a college account. The overall account-holding rate (all accounts combined) for these 7- and 8-year-old children is 3.3 percent, slightly higher than the account-holding rate (2.3 percent) reported by Nam and colleagues (2013) when children were

14. Study participants were located by a survey research firm, were willing to provide their child's Social Security number (which was required for the automatic account), and completed the telephone survey; they surely differ from nonparticipants. Comparing the birth records, Nam and colleagues (2013) find that participants and nonparticipants were similar on the following characteristics: infant's gender, birth weight, and race and Hispanic origin; mother's marital status and metropolitan residency; and father's age. The two groups differed significantly on three characteristics, but the differences were small: on average, treatment mothers were older (25.5 vs. 25.2 years) and had more education (12.5 vs. 12.2 years). More treatment mothers were born in the United States (87 vs. 84 percent). The survey research firm created weight variables to adjust for oversampling of minority groups and observed self-selection bias (Marks et al. 2008). However, if participants differed systematically from nonparticipants in ways not captured by birth records, weighting might not eliminate self-selection bias. This problem would affect external validity but not the comparisons between treatment and control groups.

TABLE 2. OK 529 Accounts, Assets, and Earnings by Treatment Status

	2014 Outcomes			2009 Difference
	Treatment (<i>n</i> = 1,358)	Control (<i>n</i> = 1,346)	Difference	
Any OK 529 account (%)	99.94	3.27	96.66***	99.94**
Any OK 529 assets (%)	99.94	3.16	96.78***	
OK 529 asset amount (with SEED OK incentives, mean, in dollars):				
SEED OK account	1,432.11	.00	1,432.11***	1,002.13**
All accounts combined	1,850.91	322.80	1,528.10***	1,039.62**
Earnings on OK 529 assets (mean, in dollars):				
SEED OK account	424.33	.00	424.33***	
All accounts combined	569.50	109.17	460.32***	

Note.—OK 529 = Oklahoma 529 College Savings Plan; SEED OK = SEED for Oklahoma Kids. The 2014 outcomes were measured on December 31 with data from TIAA. Accounts are OK 529 accounts with a SEED OK child as beneficiary. The SEED OK account was opened automatically for every treatment child. Assets are any funds in an OK 529 account, including investment earnings; for treatment children, assets include the \$1,000 initial deposit, the \$100 account-opening deposit, and match money. Data are weighted to be representative of births in Oklahoma in 2007, and weighted bivariate linear regression was used to test for statistical significance. The 2009 differences were measured on June 30, 2009, with data from TIAA and come from table 3 of Nam and colleagues (2013).

** *p* < .01.

*** *p* < .001.

TABLE 3. Individual OK 529 Accounts and Savings by Treatment Status

	2014 Outcomes			2009 Difference
	Treatment (<i>n</i> = 1,358)	Control (<i>n</i> = 1,346)	Difference	
Individual OK 529 account (%):				
Mother-owned account	16.79	1.14	15.65***	15.39**
Other individual account	2.56	2.16	.40	.38
All individual accounts combined	18.39	3.27	15.12***	
Individual OK 529 savings (without SEED OK incentives, %):				
Mother-owned account	8.39	1.10	7.28***	
Other individual account	2.56	2.09	.47	
All individual accounts combined	10.04	3.16	6.88***	
Individual OK 529 savings amount (without SEED OK incentives; mean, in dollars):				
Mother-owned account	261.07	58.56	202.51***	34.02**
Other individual account	133.31	264.24	−130.92	−12.83
All individual accounts combined	394.39	322.80	63.17	

Note.—OK 529 = Oklahoma 529 College Savings Plan; SEED OK = SEED for Oklahoma Kids. The 2014 outcomes were measured on December 31 with data from TIAA. Individual accounts were opened by mothers, fathers, grandparents, or other individuals for a SEED OK child; SEED OK accounts opened automatically for treatment children are not included. Savings come from personal deposits to individual accounts (SEED OK deposits are not included) and investment earnings. The measure is net savings (deposits minus withdrawals). Data are weighted to be representative of births in Oklahoma in 2007, and weighted bivariate linear regression was used to test for statistical significance. The 2009 differences were measured on June 30 with data from TIAA and come from table 3 of Nam and colleagues (2013).

** *p* < .01.

*** *p* < .001.

about 2 years old. As anticipated, essentially all children in the treatment group (99.9 percent) have an OK 529 account. (One treatment child's account was closed very early in the study because her mother opted out, citing religious reasons.) Thus, as expected, the effect of the CDA on overall account holding remains very large. The CDA's effect on ownership of college assets is also very large.

As anticipated, and largely because of the automatic \$1,000 initial deposit, treatment children have more assets than control children. On average and across all OK 529 accounts, control children have \$323 in assets (median = 0); the mean for treatment children, \$1,851, is almost six times larger (median = \$1,426). The CDA's effect on overall asset value is substantially larger than it was in 2009, primarily because investment earnings have increased the value of the initial deposit. Among treatment children, the mean amount of earnings from all OK 529 deposits is \$569, compared to \$109 for control children. The median amount of earnings for treatment children is \$426; this is also the median amount of earnings among treatment children who received only the \$1,000 initial deposit. Note that this increase in asset value (and increase in effect) occurred despite sharp declines in the value of SEED OK investments during the Great Recession of 2008.¹⁵

INDIVIDUAL OK 529 ACCOUNT HOLDING AND SAVINGS

Next, we examine findings related to OK 529 accounts opened by individuals and deposits into these accounts by individuals. Recent SEED OK research (Beverly, Clancy, et al. 2015) shows that 205 treatment mothers have opened OK 529 accounts for SEED OK children (all received the \$100 account-opening deposit), and 203 of these accounts remained open as of December 31, 2014. The two mothers who closed their accounts withdrew the \$100 deposit.¹⁶ Another mother withdrew the deposit but did not close her account. Thus, after about 7 years, three of 205 treatment mothers (1.5 percent) have withdrawn the account-opening deposit.

In table 3, we show account-holding rates for treatment and control groups. When data are weighted, 16.8 percent of treatment children have

15. The value of the \$1,000 deposit invested in the OK 529 Balanced Option on December 27, 2007, fell to a low of \$698 at the end of the first quarter of 2009. Its value on December 31, 2014 (\$1,426) was at the highest point for the data collection period.

16. There is no SEED OK penalty for withdrawing this deposit, but mothers were not explicitly informed that they could do so.

mother-owned accounts, compared to 1.1 percent of control children. The two groups have similar account-holding rates for other individual accounts, a little over 2 percent. These findings are similar to findings reported by Nam and colleagues (2013). Of note, if SEED OK information and incentives were causing treatment families to open mother-owned accounts when they would otherwise have opened father-owned accounts, we would expect treatment children to be less likely than control children to have other individual accounts. There is no evidence of this substitution, suggesting that the SEED OK information and incentives encouraged new account ownership. This interpretation is also supported by the fact that when all individual accounts are combined, treatment children are still much more likely than control children to have an individual OK 529 account (18.4 percent vs. 3.3 percent).

Another way that we extend the analysis in Nam and colleagues' work (2013) is by reporting the percentage of children who have any individual OK 529 savings.¹⁷ Treatment children (8.4 percent) are almost eight times more likely than control children (1.1 percent) to have savings in a mother-owned account. Treatment and control children are about equally likely to have savings in other individual accounts. When all individual accounts are combined, treatment children are over three times more likely to have individual savings (10.0 percent vs. 3.2 percent). Again, these patterns indicate that the SEED OK intervention—by establishing an asset building instrument and process and/or through specific information and incentives—has created new savers at a meaningful level.

Next, we examine the value of individual OK 529 savings (excluding the value of SEED OK incentives). As the bottom panel of table 3 shows, the mean savings amount in mother-owned accounts for treatment children (\$261) is more than four times greater than that for control children (\$59). The mean savings in other individual accounts for treatment children (\$133) is about half the mean savings in such accounts for control children (\$264). This could be evidence of asset shifting, but the treatment-control difference is not statistically significant ($p = .25$). Of note, the treatment-control difference we observe is larger than the treatment-control difference reported by Nam

17. Treatment children can have individual accounts but no individual savings because they never received personal deposits (the \$100 account-opening deposit fulfilled the minimum contribution requirement for new accounts) or because they received personal deposits that were later withdrawn.

and colleagues (2013). Asset shifting presumably occurs over time, and the increase in the treatment-control difference hints at the possibility of such shifting. Finally, when all individual accounts are combined, the mean savings amount for treatment children (\$394) is somewhat higher than that for control children (\$323), but the difference is not statistically significant ($p = .52$).

These findings regarding individual savings amounts should be interpreted cautiously. The means are not very good indicators of savings for typical SEED OK children because they are heavily influenced by the small proportion of children with very large savings amounts.¹⁸ Also, large standard errors limit the likelihood that treatment-control differences are statistically significant. The median savings amounts for both groups equal zero. Our overall interpretation is that, after 7 years, the CDA in SEED OK has had a modest effect on individual savings held in the incentivized account, but it is not clear whether the CDA has increased individual savings across all OK 529 accounts.

DISCUSSION

Designed to begin early in the lives of all children, CDAs provide structure, subsidies, and incentives to help families accumulate assets for developmental purposes, including postsecondary education and training. The SEED OK experiment is well positioned to examine the effect of CDAs. Sampling from a full state population with random assignment is uncommon in social research. Moreover, SEED OK draws upon account data rather than participants' self-reports concerning account holding, assets, and savings. The intervention itself is also noteworthy; the CDA in SEED OK has features recommended by CDA proponents, including automatic account opening for all children at birth, automatic initial deposits, and a progressive savings subsidy.

This study provides new evidence about the effect of the CDA on several financial outcomes. As expected, the CDA continues to have a large influence on whether children have a college account, whether they have any assets for college, and the value of their college assets. In fact, the treatment-control difference in average asset value is larger in 2014 than it was 5 years earlier, largely because of investment earnings.

18. For example, 22 children (11 in the treatment group) have more than \$10,000 in individual OK 529 accounts.

With regard to individual saving behavior, the CDA continues to have positive effects on two outcomes: it increases account holding by mothers and the value of personal savings in mother-owned accounts. However, the CDA does not clearly increase the value of personal savings when savings in OK 529 accounts held by others (e.g., grandparents, other relatives) are considered. This is perhaps not surprising because these other people were not targeted in the SEED OK intervention.

We know from extended interviews with treatment mothers that lack of surplus income is a common barrier to saving and even to account opening. For example, one mother said, “Yeah, I got all the information on that—that they would match whatever I put in there up to a certain amount. I just didn’t have the money to do that. . . . Right now, it’s just not possible” (Gray et al. 2012, 66). A number of mothers talked about the need to purchase diapers, food, medicine, and other necessities. Also, substantial challenges arose because SEED OK distributed information exclusively by mail. For example, the extended interviews indicate that some mothers misunderstood the accounts and incentives. Some mistakenly thought that they were required to make the \$100 account-opening deposit or regular contributions to the individual OK 529 account, and several seemed confused about the match (Gray et al. 2012).¹⁹

Nevertheless, treatment children are almost six times more likely than control children to have an OK 529 account opened for them by parents or other individuals, and they are three times more likely to have OK 529 savings deposited by parents or other individuals. (Other research shows that the CDA in SEED OK has influenced individual savings behavior in families across the economic spectrum, not just in advantaged families [Beverly, Kim, et al. 2015; Wikoff et al. 2015]). These outcomes are important if the acts of opening a college account and setting aside personal savings for future college expenses, regardless of amount, indicate that parents view their children as college-bound and are willing to plan in advance for college expenses and/or effectively communicate to children that they are college-bound (Beverly et al. 2013). Opening an account and making a first deposit

19. SEED OK materials were delivered by mail to avoid exposing control families to the intervention. If CDAs were implemented under a universal state or national policy, public service announcements could be used to increase awareness and understanding of 529 plans and CDA program incentives, potentially increasing savings participation.

are also important outcomes if they start the savings ball rolling by providing a convenient place to save for college in the future and triggering regular account statements that serve as reminders to save.

LESSONS FOR POLICY

The CDA policy being tested in SEED OK is promising. In the SEED OK treatment group, virtually all children, even the most disadvantaged, have accounts and are accumulating assets for their future development. In the SEED OK control group, in contrast, only 3 percent of 7- and 8-year-olds have OK 529 accounts and assets, and ownership rates have been especially low for control group children in socioeconomically disadvantaged groups (Nam et al. 2013; Beverly, Kim, et al. 2015). National studies of participation in 529 plans (US Department of the Treasury 2009; Government Accountability Office 2012) and other forms of college savings (Sallie Mae 2014) confirm that disadvantaged children are very unlikely to have designated accounts and savings for college. In short, college savings initiatives that rely on individuals to open accounts and save have low take-up rates and strongly favor advantaged children. In addition, the large public tax subsidies for these existing 529 plans are highly regressive.

In contrast and by design, an automatic CDA extends the opportunity to have college accounts and assets, with public subsidies, to all children. In SEED OK, 99.9 percent of treatment children have college accounts with over \$1,400 in assets. Thus, the SEED OK experiment has demonstrated that true universality—that is, full inclusion—is possible. A complementary policy lesson is that a fully inclusive asset-building policy may occur only with automatic enrollment and automatic deposits. In this regard, it may not be possible for many local child savings programs to somehow add up to an inclusive policy. In other words, an inclusive policy is not local projects writ large. It is instead a structure that can bring everyone in. A fully inclusive policy sets the stage for widespread participation in asset building and more equitable distribution of public resources.

In addition to demonstrating that full inclusion can be achieved through automatic enrollment and automatic deposits, SEED OK shows the value of implementing inclusive asset-building programs on a 529 platform: public control of 529 plans combined with centralized accounting and investments provides a policy structure that facilitates universal and progressive innovations (Clancy et al. 2015). In part this is possible because, when everyone

is participating, large account balances can cross-subsidize small account balances so that a fully inclusive policy can be commercially viable for asset managers while at the same time it achieves the critical social goal of inclusion.

Another advantage of using a 529 plan is the potential for market growth. About 7 years after the SEED OK intervention began, investment earnings comprised almost 30 percent of OK 529 assets for the typical treatment child. Despite the Great Recession, initial deposits into the OK 529 have grown by more than 40 percent. If children receive investment accounts seeded with automatic initial deposits when the children are very young, these accounts may accumulate meaningful assets over time, even for children whose families are unable to contribute. Although the importance of market growth is taken for granted in long-term asset building for upper-income households, low- or no-growth accounts such as bank savings accounts have typically been used in asset-building programs targeted to low-income households (see, e.g., Sherraden et al. 2000). SEED OK demonstrates that all households can benefit from asset growth.

The fact that the CDA has a large influence on asset accumulation primarily because of the initial deposit and subsequent investment earnings reveals the importance of program deposits. Findings from the first 7 years of SEED OK suggest that automatic program deposits are essential to enable low- and moderate-income families to accumulate assets for college. Deposits made very early in a child's life and held in an investment vehicle have the greatest potential for market growth. Moreover, it seems likely that automatic, targeted milestone deposits (suggested by Sherraden [1991]) could have a greater effect on asset accumulation in disadvantaged families than a savings match.

POLICY INFLUENCE AND THE POTENTIAL OF SEED OK

Even at this fairly early stage, SEED OK has shaped asset-building policies and programs. As noted above, in 2014, Maine began automatically enrolling all resident newborns in the state CDA program rather than requiring parents to enroll children. This decision was directly informed by the automatic design of the CDA in SEED OK and evidence from SEED OK that automatic features can result in full inclusion (Clancy and Sherraden 2014). Statewide CDA programs in Connecticut, Nevada, and Rhode Island (Clancy and Beverly 2016) were influenced by SEED OK research. Research from SEED OK has also shaped CDA activity in several cities, including Ferguson,

Missouri, where CDAs are part of a signature call to action in the Ferguson Commission's (2015) "Forward through Ferguson" report.

As time passes and children age, researchers will be able to assess whether the assets accumulated in the CDA, along with any changes in attitudes, behaviors, and child development outcomes, are enough to increase rates of college enrollment and completion. The qualities of the SEED OK experiment—which include probability sampling across a full state population, random assignment to treatment and control groups, low study attrition to date, and multiple research methods to examine CDA effects—suggest that the SEED OK experiment can continue to produce important insights for many years to come.

As SEED OK continues and other state and local CDA policies and projects are initiated and gather experience, data on CDA performance and effects will also expand. Should research results continue to be positive, this body of work could, in the future, inform a proposal for a universal CDA policy for the United States. Testing this potential is the purpose of the SEED OK policy experiment.

NOTE

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ESSAY REVIEW

Punishing the Poor

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ABSTRACT Social policy, from schools to income support and criminal justice, has taken a disciplinary turn. It is as if we have collectively decided we can punish our way out of inequality and injustice and “getting tough on ‘fill-in-the-blank social problem’” has become our only mode of policy governance. This essay reviews three recently published books that examine this trend: *Poor Justice: How the Poor Fare in the Courts*, by Vicki Lens (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), *Sentencing Fragments: Penal Reform in America, 1975–2025*, by Michael Tonry (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), and *Progressive Punishment: Job Loss, Jail Growth, and the Neoliberal Logic of Carceral Expansion*, by Judah Schept (New York: New York University Press, 2016).

INTRODUCTION

An ever-expanding range of social welfare and social control institutions—social services, schools, public housing, policing, probation, and parole—are being drawn into what scholars refer to as the carceral state (Simon 2007; Hinton 2015) or the disciplining or punishing policy regime (Beckett and Western 2001; Soss, Fording, and Schram 2011; Ferguson 2014). The breadth and depth of these changes are altering the nature of social welfare institutions and social policy. Poverty governance has, to a large extent, always been stingy, reluctant, and punishing, but this recent and widespread turn in social policy has material consequences for the lives of those depending on these policies and institutions. As Joe Soss, Richard Fording, and Sanford Schram (2011, 295) summarize, “The state’s carceral ‘right hand’ has risen in importance; welfare discourses and procedures are increasingly criminalized; and welfare and criminal justice operations now function as integrated elements of a single system for managing marginal populations.”

The changes are profound, even if often overlooked, and they include:

- Transformed “safe schools” are now locked down with secured entrances.¹ Some fenced playgrounds are topped with prison-like concertino wire, and pro-gun advocates urge teachers to take on the role of armed guards. School resource officers criminalize student disruptive behavior, while at the same time they reduce more violent and threatening behaviors (Theriot 2009).
- Jail, prison, probation, parole, warrants, and car and pedestrian stops have become everyday experiences in poor communities, especially black and brown communities. Many poor individuals live as fugitives in their own neighborhoods (Goffman 2014).
- Policy and law contribute to high eviction rates in inner-city minority neighborhoods, a pattern that prevents the poor from accumulating wealth, as meager belongings are piled beside city streets unless those who have been evicted can pay exorbitant storage fees (Desmond 2012). Eviction falls most heavily on women, with some communities enforcing nuisance ordinances in a way that suppresses 911 calls and perpetuates domestic violence (Desmond and Valdez 2012).
- Those seeking meager social benefits are increasingly subjected to high levels of surveillance and punishment (Gilliom 2001). Perversely, neoliberal reforms have created a policy politics where those benefiting from welfare programs are less the mythical welfare queens so denounced by President Reagan and more the private corporations who receive often lucrative contracts to provide meager welfare services (Soss, Fording, and Schram 2011).

The three books reviewed in this essay—*Poor Justice: How the Poor Fare in the Courts*, by Vicki Lens (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), *Sentencing Fragments: Penal Reform in America, 1975–2025*, by Michael Tonry (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), and *Progressive Punishment: Job Loss, Jail Growth, and the Neoliberal Logic of Carceral Expansion*, by Judah Schept (New York: New York University Press, 2016)—tell compelling stories about contemporary policy and how the state treats the poor and incarcerated. While none of the three examine the breadth of issues of current poverty governance, each adds a few tiles to our mosaic of understanding.

1. For a multigenerational ethnographic history of one school, see Morrill and Musheno (forthcoming).

THE POOR AND THE LAW

Vicki Lens's *Poor Justice: How the Poor Fare in the Courts* explores the many ways in which the law and courts, from fair hearings to the Supreme Court, shape the lives of the economically disadvantaged. Lens prefaces her book by reminding us that for the poor, law and legal institutions, such as the police, courts, and administrative hearings, are omnipresent, that "law is all over" (x). Although law and policy shape the lives of those who are economically better off, the poor feel more directly the coercive power of the state.²

From the beginning, Lens reminds us that, "Virtually since the inception of federal welfare programs, welfare policy has been one of exclusion, rather than inclusion, seeking to deter certain people from assistance" (11). As policy has shifted from morality tests to work tests, the daily struggles of the poor to find food, shelter, safety, and community remain. And while most of the poor show strength and resilience that few of us could muster, some, like the rest of us, are pulled into violence and self-destruction. Just as it is for all people, it is essential to not think of the poor in the singular and justice for the poor as a matter of the fair application of law and procedure.

Poor Justice provides a detailed tour of the complicated legal institutions, from administrative hearings to the Supreme Court, that shape the lives of the poor. For those with a good grasp of law and legal institutions, much of the book is a thoughtful review. For those with less knowledge of how law and courts shape the lives of those relying on social services, Lens's book is essential reading.

Poor Justice has the scope of a textbook and often sacrifices a compelling message for wide coverage. Lens's understanding of this material is more than academic. She has worked as counsel to poor clients and has done path-breaking research on the role of administrative hearings in welfare cases. The book is at its best when Lens's own voice and insight are most present. *Poor Justice* becomes more pedestrian when reviewing cases and procedures. But even in the presentation of the textbook-like summaries, this book takes us close to the messy problems and hard-to-classify cases, for example, the case of child neglect when the mother is a victim of abuse.

Beyond the description of law, policy, and institutions, *Poor Justice* explores several important themes. One is the role of the fair hearing in

2. For an examination of how policy and law provide welfare less visibly to the nonpoor, see Suzanne Mettler (2011).

poverty governance. While it is common to critique these institutions, Lens underscores how rules of procedure and evidence, which in their formality often disenfranchise the poor, help realize the right to a fair hearing. These rights, however, depend on the presence of legal advocates representing the poor. Lens explores the difference between procedural and substantive justice through the distinction between legal and social talk. Hearings do provide a setting for the aggrieved to tell their stories even when they do not bend justice, although this form of procedural justice is hardly a substitute for more substantive justice. Research on police-citizen encounters finds that treating citizens fairly and politely does not erase the perceived illegitimacy of stop-and-frisks or investigatory traffic stops (Epp, Maynard-Moody, and Haider-Markel 2014). The poor, like everyone else, should not have to settle for procedural justice.

In addition, Lens explores how social reform litigation and the focus on rights can improve the lives of those needing social assistance. The chapters focusing on persons with mental disabilities (chap. 6) and the homeless (chap. 7) provide a compelling review of the law and the individuals involved in the cases. Law and courts can and do promote and then institutionalize social reform (Epp 2009). In Lens's view, law and rights have great power, but also profound limits, in promoting social reform: "A deeper problem may be the efficacy of rights. Rights are our talismans, the belief that in search of a perfect social order we can create rules of entitlement and obligations and enforce them through the courts. . . . Even when rights succeed, it may come at the cost of equally compelling rights. The right to shelter cases and their aftermath, which results in more resources to the homeless, meant fewer resources for poor people in general" (134).

My greatest concern about this book is that Lens reinforces a dangerous simplicity—a caricature—of bureaucracy and bureaucrats. She describes welfare bureaucracies as places of "hyperproceduralism" and courts and judges as places of judgment and nuance. The routine dismissal of bureaucrats as functionaries echoes a time before we had a good grasp of the moral complexity and social agency of frontline workers.³ This is surprising given Lens's other work, which suggests common ground between administrative judges and frontline workers. Administrative judges and frontline workers are both guided by procedure and law, and both have considerable discretion in dealing with individual cases. In previous work, Lens argues that admin-

3. For a recent exploration, see Zacka (forthcoming).

istrative judges are bureaucrats like social workers, but with perhaps greater power and authority (Lens 2012).

Lens concludes this book with an honest assessment of the power of law and courts: “I no longer believe that the judiciary is hallowed ground. Success (and failure) is often a function of time, place, and the identity of the judge, rather than an appeal to sacred texts or lofty principles. It is an all-too-human institution that reflects our imperfections, both personal and political; including our prejudices towards the poor. But it is also capable of great feats of justice, and is well worth our efforts and attention” (208). I would only add that the same could be said of human service and street-level organizations.

THE HISTORY OF SENTENCING REFORM

Michael Tonry’s *Sentencing Fragments: Penal Reform in America, 1975–2025*, provides a different look at the past, present, and future of the carceral state. This is a powerful book, beginning with this opening sentence: “American sentencing is a disaster—unjust, unprincipled, arbitrary, overly severe, and absurdly expensive” (1). American sentencing laws and practices are essential ingredients in mass incarceration, which disproportionately affects the lives of the poor, especially poor minorities. These are the same individuals and communities whom Lens discusses in relation to legal institutions.

Sentencing Fragments explores in fine-grain detail the history of sentencing reform since 1975. In Tonry’s view, US sentencing prior to 1975 was humane, hardheaded, and practical. Since the 1980s, sentencing policy and laws have shifted from the courtroom to the political campaign, and judgment has given way to fear. In Tonry’s words, “The center of gravity of American sentencing moved from the solid confines of the courtroom to the emotional whirlpools of the campaign trail” (viii). It is important to stress that the shift to more punitive sentencing and limiting judicial discretion was intentional and bipartisan, with President Bill Clinton and Republican leaders serving as strong advocates for harsher, longer, and less flexible sentencing.⁴

4. Not all states followed the same path. For example, California chose “three-strikes” and mandatory minimums, which greatly increased incarceration; Minnesota developed a sentencing grid that did not substantially increase sentences (Walker 1993).

Perhaps the major contribution of Tonry's book is not the thorough and cogent, if distressing, history of the punitive turn in sentencing, but how he carefully lays out a theory and principles of sentencing that could provide some guidance moving forward. The current push for sentencing reform is based more on budget worries than on moral outrage. Although the high cost of incarceration has created common ground between conservative and liberal critics, between the Koch brothers and Black Lives Matter, the budget-busting cost of mass incarceration should not be the singular concern. Tonry argues that we need to move away from fear- and safety-based political arguments to a more principled argument: "American sentencing systems are incoherent because American ideas about sentencing and punishment are incoherent. . . . Until that changes, American sentencing will remain inconsistent, arbitrary, severe, unjust, and often hypocritical" (164).

Tonry examines in thoughtful detail historical and forward-looking theories of sentencing. He argues that we must return to core principles and that punishment should be based on theories of justice that include principles of fairness, equality, proportionality, and parsimony. Based on these principles, he asks how we can "unwind" the "unjust, cruel, and needlessly destructive" (204) system of mass incarceration. Moving forward requires reducing the flow of inmates into jail and prison and finding ways to move the imprisoned back into society.

A good place to start, Tonry argues, is by repealing, or stopping applying, the three-strikes, life without parole, and mandatory minimum laws. Although judicial and prosecutorial discretion raise concerns about non-impartial justice, bounded discretion is, in Tonry's view, essential to enacting justice. This is a theme that runs through *Poor Justice*. Yet, even with the movement from left and right to re-reform sentencing, none of the punitive laws have been repealed, and no state has enacted laws that address those who are stuck in prison because of these laws.

Strangely, Tonry's review of the politicization of sentencing, the rise of mass incarceration, and the moral reasoning behind sentencing reform rarely mentions race. Tonry observes, "They [the overly punitive laws] were enacted because their supporters believed that 'we' deserve protection from 'them,' and that 'they' have forfeited any claim to have their interests or human rights taken into account" (208), but he fails to note that the "they" and the "them" in this quote are too often people of color. Not until the next-to-last sentence of the book does race receive its appropri-

ate emphasis: “American mass incarceration, absolutely and especially in its effects on black people, will be seen by our descendants as an extraordinary moral failure, a classic instance of man’s inhumanity to man” (253).

Tonry’s more general discussions of fairness, equity, and human rights never directly address race, but race is fundamental to understanding mass incarceration. As Bruce Western (2006, 7) writes, “The prison boom opened a new chapter in American race relations. . . . The punitive turn in criminal justice disappointed the promise of the civil rights movement. By cleaving off poor black communities from the mainstream, the prison boom left America more divided.” Thoughtful and passionate voices on the role of race in mass incarceration, such as Michelle Alexander’s (2010) *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* and Khalil Gibran Muhammad’s (2010) *The Condemnation of Blackness: Race, Crime, and the Making of Modern Urban America*, are overlooked, making the book eerily colorblind. What is all the more surprising is that Tonry (2011) has written an important book on race and incarceration, *Punishing Race: A Continuing American Dilemma*. The current book should not be read without, at a minimum, also reading *Punishing Race*.

Although perhaps it would be the subject of a different book, *Sentencing Fragments* is also silent on the role of for-profit prisons. While less than 10 percent of prisoners nationwide are held in for-profit prisons, these businesses expanded with the rise of mass incarceration, with attention now turning to the detention of illegal immigrants. Contracts to for-profit prisons often stipulate minimum prison populations, creating incentives to reduce the flow out and increase the flow into detention, jail, and prison. The questions of what the role of neoliberal governance and the growth of “prison industries” has meant to the rise of mass incarceration and the resistance to change carceral policies are left unanswered.

NEOLIBERALISM AND CARCERAL POLICY

The neoliberal reliance on for-profit firms in implementing policy and law is brought into the foreground in Judah Schept’s *Progressive Punishment: Job Loss, Jail Growth, and the Neoliberal Logic of Carceral Expansion*. Schept’s book narrows our focus and provides a detailed “critical” ethnography of a community effort to build the Justice Campus, an alternative jail complex near Bloomington, Indiana. In this account, progressive, humane community leaders turn once again to reforming the jail and prison to correct the

inhumanity and futility of our current system of incarceration. They advocate for the creation of a Justice Campus with training, support, and reform replacing the brutality of carceral containment. In interview after interview, local judges, police leaders, local government officials, and community activists spoke poignantly of the need to end mass incarceration and the brutal treatment of inmates. This is a centuries-old pattern, with most reform efforts leading to deepening our reliance on prison (Rothman 1971, 1980).

Schept enters his fieldwork from a critical, even ideological, perspective. Rather than being an outsider, Schept is a member of a local group, Decarcerate Monroe County (DMC), devoted to abolishing jail and prison. DMC sees the Justice Campus, however well-meaning and progressive it may be, as sustaining, not eliminating, an unjust system of imprisonment. While these prison “abolitionists” may not argue for the complete elimination of jail or prison sentences, they do argue for a drastic reduction, as close to zero as possible, of the use of incarceration in criminal justice. (In this regard, Tonry provides a provocative way of thinking about incarceration. He acknowledges that there are dangerous individuals who can be justly imprisoned to protect others. Tonry suggests that this should be thought of as quarantine and that the goal is less punishment and more protecting others. Thinking of prison as quarantine suggests that the human rights of the prisoner must be honored.)

In developing his critical analysis, Schept digs deeply into the work of Katherine Beckett, Pierre Bourdieu, Michel Foucault, Khalil Gibran Muhammad, Jonathan Simon, and Loïc Wacquant. One of the great strengths of this book is how clearly Schept expresses and applies the at times difficult ideas of these essential theorists. *Progressive Punishment* discusses with depth and insight the development of the “prison-industrial complex” and neoliberal governance of criminal justice. For example, Schept examines how the “Carceral-Welfare Complex” provides jobs lost to the decline in local manufacturing (66) and the progressive belief—hope?—that local food production as a form of hard, clean labor can prevent juvenile crime (96). Schept ends his book asserting that, “Neoliberal ideology, policy, and discourse have effectively naturalized carceral expansion into a new political common sense for communities facing multiple crises of deindustrialization and rising social inequalities” (253). If the reader gets nothing else out of this book other than a clearer understanding of the social theory that speaks to the development of the carceral state, then it is well worth the read.

Qualitative research is a balance between privileging the voices of the insiders and giving full expression to the views of the researcher/author. Most qualitative researchers strike the balance in favor of giving voice to the often-conflicting views of those living in the communities and groups studied. Two powerful recent examples are Alice Goffman's (2014) *On the Run: Fugitive Life in an American City* and Forrest Stuart's (2016) *Down, Out, and Under Arrest: Policing and Everyday Life in Skid Row*. Both books give full expression to the residents of poor minority communities responding to the tightening grip of the carceral state. Goffman's book places theory in the background and uses her fieldwork to raise questions about the reach of Foucault's internalized panopticon. Stuart gets his hands dirty digging into the street-level reality of the carceral state and takes us far beyond stereotypes of the poor and police.

In *Progressive Punishment*, theory is in the foreground. Interview quotes and fieldwork observations are made and quickly assessed in how they correspond to theoretical frames. While I personally find a greater emphasis on the voices of others more compelling, Schept makes a strong case for his approach: "I consider some of the primary scholarly goals of this book to be a critical examination of the veneer of benevolent objectivity and to attempt to show the committed subjectivities that constructed the discourse and politics of carceral expansion" (163–64).

His ultimate conclusion is that, "Evidence from my fieldwork suggests that carceral habitus and abolitionist politics were irreconcilable, one grounded in the necessity of increased carceral capacities and the other inconsistent on decarceration as a starting point for reform" (165–66). Schept's recounting of the community leaders' effort to build the Justice Campus and how anti-jail activists worked to discredit and resist this form of progressive punishment makes a strong case for this conclusion. I share Schept's view of the need to stress decarceration over therapeutic justice, rehabilitation, and more humane jails, but a stronger book would not just apply theory, it would question and extend theory. What can we learn from the reformers and this community that questions or challenges the guiding social theory? Schept plays off the title of James C. Scott's (1998) *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*, with several chapters headed "Seeing Like a Jail." One of Scott's central observations is the importance of practical knowledge, like that expressed by the local criminal justice reformers, over theoretical and technical knowledge. Yes, these reformers' understanding is limited by carceral habitus, but the advantage of these

pragmatic insights is that they are refined by the constant rub between observation and experience; they are messy and inconsistent, but in that they are more reflective of real people, in real communities, facing real social problems. Schept's theoretical frame floats above these more quotidian truths.

CONCLUSION

All of us, whether judges, frontline workers, politicians, community leaders, or critical scholars, are, to a meaningful degree, acting to reinforce and reify social structures and schemas. We can escape only fleetingly *habitas* and *doxa* (Bourdieu 1977). And we must deal with pragmatic issues in social life: How does the cop respond to domestic violence or property crime accompanying the drug trade? How does the social worker respond to child neglect or human trafficking? We can, and we should, place these most human situations in a larger social context, but we, especially the judges or frontline workers, must also deal with individuals and situations with our eyes wide open, guided by, but not entirely blinkered by, our theoretical frames. One of the essential contributions of these three books is that in reading them we can better reflect on the frames that so powerfully guide law, policy, institutions, and our own judgments.

For the past 15 years, I have focused my research and writing on frontline workers and their interaction with citizens and noncitizens. My research has been on the micro-encounters on both sides of the literal and metaphorical "desk" separating the state and citizens/noncitizens (Dubois 2010). I have listened to scores of interviews and stories told by social workers, police officers, teachers, and, more recently, individuals stopped by the police. My work with various colleagues explores how frontline workers engage in conforming to and shaping our vital state institutions, whether in direct or contracted provision of service.

While much can be learned from studying these intersections of the state and the citizen/noncitizen, such frontline encounters are nested in, and can only be understood in, the context of larger organizational, institutional, social, and historical forces. Frontline worker agency and moral judgment are embedded in institutions, just as institutions are "inhabited" by individuals and are not merely vessels of rules, norms, and histories (Hallett and Ventresca 2006). Although it was not among the

goals of their authors, all three books reviewed here speak to this “dialogic” tension between theories of embedded agency and inhabited institutions (Maynard-Moody and Musheno 2015). While my own work highlights expressions of frontline pragmatic improvisation and, at times, explicit disobedience with formal rules, Vicky Lens’s *Poor Justice* reminds us of the positive role of formal legal procedure and institutions in protecting citizen rights and in promoting political movements. Moreover, as the epidemic of police violence and aggression underscores, these legal and institutional protections provide some recourse, however weak and infrequently applied, for citizens and noncitizens from frontline worker abuse.

Scholars of frontline work have long struggled to understand how the decisions and actions of these frontline policy actors reflect and shape how policy is materialized. How, for example, do police stops and warrant checks fit into mass incarceration and the ever-expanding carceral state? Works of policy history, like Michael Tonry’s *Sentencing Fragments*, provide the broader frame that helps us understand how the individual judgments of frontline workers are shaped by and contribute to the shared, if false, belief that getting tough on crime and focusing on low-income minority communities will somehow make the rest of us safer. Further, Tonry underscores for me that reform of policing requires more than better accountability, training, and tossing out bad apples. Reducing and re-directing mass incarceration will require a different framing of our sentencing and criminal justice policy. To interpret his work into my way of thinking, we need to embed frontline agency in a different normative structure.

In *Progressive Punishment*, Judah Schept documents just such a struggle as he recounts how justice-minded reformers in Bloomington, Indiana, struggled to reinvent the local jail system while still operating in the same policy frame of incarceration. Schept’s book tells of the tension and struggle between the current *carceral habitus* and some, not yet fully articulated, alternative. I personally put more trust in the pragmatism of the frontline worker than Schept’s observations suggest and less in the value of broader theoretical constructs. Nonetheless, Schept, along with Lens and Tonry, highlights the undercurrent of challenge to our troubled status quo, and for this I am most grateful. Different readers with different interests may find other insights in these books, but for all scholars of policy governance, legal institutions, and the disciplinary turn in social policy, all three books deserve attention.

NOTE

Steven Maynard-Moody is director of the Institute for Policy and Social Research and professor in the School of Public Affairs and Administration at the University of Kansas. His current research explores frontline worker expressions of public policy and governance. His most recent book, *Pulled Over: How Police Stops Define Race and Citizenship* (with Charles Epp and Donald Haider-Market), was named the 2015 Best Book of Public Administration Scholarship by the American Society of Public Administration.

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Book Reviews

Border Lives: Fronterizos, Transnational Migrants, and Commuters in Tijuana. By Sergio Chávez. New York: Oxford University Press, 2016. Pp. 224. \$99.00 (cloth); \$24.95 (paper).

Border Lives by Sergio Chávez relays the lived experiences of *fronterizos* (people of northern Mexico) adapting to the realities of residing in the borderlands. Chávez focuses mainly on how migrants and border commuters have made a living within circumstances largely beyond their immediate control. Crucially, strategies to negotiate livelihoods across the United States–Mexico border have fluctuated alongside changes in immigration policy. Shifts in structural constraints can open and close opportunities, rewarding those who can mobilize the resources and networks necessary to live and work in the borderlands. Broader policy changes can also redirect *fronterizos* into a variety of trajectories over time, only some of which make moving north of the United States–Mexico border both possible and advantageous. Drawing on years of ethnographic evidence, *Border Lives* explains the conditions under which *fronterizos* may reasonably expect to make a living. Chávez also details how strategies of mobility and survival can prove tenuous or even untenable.

Border Lives makes legible how and why border residents continue to tap into resources on both sides of the busiest port of entry on the Western hemisphere, even as crossing into the United States has become increasingly monitored. To cite one prominent example, Chávez notes how the “simple act of ‘waiting to cross’ concealed the many relationships and structural obstacles that are in play when an individual commutes to work in the United States and returns home to Tijuana” (160). The book’s use of in-depth qualitative evidence to shed light on complex migratory forces fits as easily alongside classic studies of migration as alongside ethnographies of urban inequality. Chávez interviewed 158 border residents who experienced life on the border at different time periods. The in-depth, historical approach vividly captures macro-level changes in the city of Tijuana and

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state practices at the port of entry. Policies enacted by Mexican economic development entities and US federal immigration authorities are prominently featured. We also learn how these forces leave indelible imprints on *fronterizos'* memories and decisions. The heart of the book analyzes the lives of border residents who experienced subsequent epochs: the Bracero Program and post-Bracero Program periods, the federal immigration reform period of the 1980s through the mid-90s, and the time period since 1994 when border enforcement heightened rapidly. Chávez leverages first-hand observations of and interviews with border commuters during the most recent era (about two-thirds of interviewees) to provide the most complete account of *fronterizos* who use a Border Crossing Card (BCC). At each step in the narrative, the book places the lives of border residents in the context of deep bodies of literature on international migration across a range of disciplines (e.g., sociology and demography, anthropology, history).

The analytic strengths of the book allow us to see the interplay between structure and agency in the borderlands. *Border Lives* does not merely remind us how constraints can limit individuals' options for action or how people continually respond to changing realities. Instead, Chávez applies what we know about network inequality (Mario Luis Small, *Unanticipated Gains: Origins of Network Inequality in Everyday Life* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2009]) to account for variation in access to crafting a livelihood on both sides of the border. The narratives rely on a subset of border residents who have managed to successfully queue during a time of intensified enforcement. Of course not everyone in Tijuana crosses, and not everyone who crosses can do so regularly or unconditionally. "By studying the process of how people form relationships through everyday interactions," Chávez writes, "I show why some networks enable human action while others constrain it" (124). Border commuting represents an instructive case for interpreting and understanding why some border residents gain access to BCCs and others do not and why some strategies and attempts at re-skilling prove more or less durable in the long run. Moreover, if transnational ties can be characterized as consequential, surely BCC holders offer insights into how and why people move between two nations.

Border Lives makes a number of contributions to the literature on international migration. The study finally catalogs what others have suspected but not yet comprehensively observed: the particular skills and knowledge deployed by border residents hoping to cross back and forth between the United States and Mexico. Moreover, the historical approach affords us

a view into how these skills are not immutable but necessarily change and evolve. For example, under one legal regime you might be wise to play down your ties to US employers, but later you might seek to legitimate the same connections under a different set of structural conditions. We also learn about the specific kinds of performances enacted at the port of entry from the point of view of prospective border crossers. The dramaturgy at the border complements what we know about unauthorized migrant presentation of self once in the interior of the United States (see, esp., Angela García, "Hidden in Plain Sight: How Unauthorized Migrants Strategically Assimilate in Restrictive Localities in California," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 40, no. 12 [2014]: 1895–1914). In addition, we learn about an oft-forgotten migrant trajectory, or what Chávez terms "stepwise return migrant" to refer to border residents who spent time crossing the border before deciding to settle in Tijuana as their final destination, even among people who could manage to live a *vida fronteriza* (binational life). By pointing attention to the phenomenon of stepwise return migration, the book joins a growing body of literature exploring alternatives to what we know about north-to-south/rural-to-urban international migration (Anju Mary Paul, "Stepwise International Migration: A Multistage Migration Pattern for the Aspiring Migrant," *American Journal of Sociology* 116, no. 6 [2011]: 1842–86).

The book accomplishes the difficult task of weighing a large body of evidence to explore how and why border residents make a living amid evolving structural conditions. A number of related questions arise, though answering them may have distracted from the central concerns of the project. First, how do border residents hoping to gain access to the United States fare if they cannot prove US or Mexican citizenship? Given the attention devoted to internal migration within Mexico and the obstacles to unauthorized entry into the United States, readers may be prompted to consider the fate of Central American *fronterizos* and where they seek livelihoods. Second, border residents rely on a "broad base of helpers" (68), whether individuals or networks or a combination of both. In this account, helpers in Tijuana do not seem to emerge in the form of organizations, which raises a question: do community-based organizations play a more central role as social helpers among immigrants who settle north of the border than among those who settle in Tijuana? Perhaps organizational helpers in Tijuana focus on other social needs. Either way, what we know about network inequality could benefit from accounting for settings with varying levels of organizational capacity to address social inequalities. Finally, the book

mentions other borders that may exhibit similar dynamics to those observed in Tijuana (e.g., Israel and the West Bank, Saudi Arabia and Yemen, Zimbabwe and South Africa). The examples suggest a need to theorize variation in binational border control and entry. *Border Lives* provides insights into a mutable feature of border patrol duties: how do agents of increasingly rationalized bureaucracies use their discretion to deal with uncertainty about the legality of a prospective crosser and the veracity of his or her claims to crossing privileges? Answering such a question would require, as Asad Asad notes in a review of *Border Lives* (*Social Forces*, 2016, online advance publication, http://scholar.harvard.edu/files/asad/files/asad_forthcoming.pdf), complementing the study with interviews with border agents. Each of these related issues likely extend beyond the scope of the study, but they also highlight the thought-provoking and agenda-expanding ability of the accounts in the book.

Border Lives brings new evidence to bear on the unfolding realities of the United States–Mexico borderlands. It relies on the lived experiences of border residents (commuters and noncommuters) to describe how seeking a livelihood has changed over time. We gain a renewed appreciation for the lives of individuals with unequal access to social resources. The lessons relayed in this book benefit from a commitment to sustained fieldwork and the triangulation of evidence from various sources (as also implemented in Matthew Desmond's *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City* [New York: Crown, 2016]). The book represents an important contribution to research on Tijuana and the borderlands, international migration trajectories, and urban ethnography.

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From the War on Poverty to the War on Crime: The Making of Mass Incarceration in America. By Elizabeth Hinton. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016. Pp. 449. \$29.95 (cloth).

No one can credibly claim that relations between police forces and communities of color in the United States are not strained. In some recent cases, this strained relationship has devolved into nothing other than open conflict, if not combat. With the shooting of a group of police officers in Dallas

in July of 2016, which was preceded by two more in a slew of recent killings of unarmed people of color by the police over the course of 2014–16, these tensions may have reached a boiling point yet again.

The year 2016 was a presidential election year, and the rhetoric that came out of Donald Trump's campaign about policing in communities of color is eerily similar to that offered by candidates in the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. In fact, Richard Nixon ran as the "law and order" candidate in 1968, and Mr. Trump used those exact words to describe himself at the 2016 Republican National Convention (Geoff Nunberg, "Is Donald Trump's Call for 'Law and Order' a Coded Racial Message?" *Fresh Air*, NPR, July 28, 2016, <http://www.npr.org/2016/07/28/487560886/is-trumps-call-for-law-and-order-a-coded-racial-message>). At a time when the use of mass incarceration as a crime deterrent is being seriously questioned and often deemed a failure by scholars, politicians, and civil servants alike (see Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* [New York: New Press, 2012] and Eric Holder Jr., "Eric Holder: We Can Have Shorter Sentences and Less Crime," *New York Times*, August 11, 2016, http://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/14/opinion/sunday/eric-h-holder-mandatory-minimum-sentences-full-of-errors.html?_r=0), the suggestion that the country needs more law and order is deeply troubling to many people. There is even an emerging literature pointing to what are known as collateral sanctions, or civil penalties faced by those who simply have arrests of various sorts on their records, as being associated with higher, not lower, rates of recidivism and crime (Tanya N. Whittle, "Felony Collateral Sanctions Effects on Recidivism: A Literature Review," *Criminal Justice Policy Review*, January 12, 2016, doi:10.1177/0887403415623328). Furthermore, federal bills have been introduced that have bipartisan support for mitigating the social and economic effects of these collateral sanctions (Corey Booker, "Our Criminal–Legal System: Justice Doesn't Have to Be Missing from the Equation," *Huffington Post*, April 15, 2015, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/cory-booker/our-criminal-legal-system_b_7071792.html). Yet still, one might ask why, given the recent targeting of police officers, this country would not need more law and order, stricter punishments, or even an increased police presence in communities where violence often takes place. Elizabeth Hinton's work is an invaluable reminder of the root causes of the strained relationship between police and communities of color we face today. At the same time, it is an exemplary guide on how to best move forward when thinking about mass incarceration and the rela-

tions between police forces and communities of color across the United States.

Hinton dives decades before the escalation of Nixon's war on drugs in the 1980s and 1990s during the Reagan, Bush, and Clinton administrations to point to a more insidious culprit for the rise of mass incarceration in the United States: the legislative infrastructure allowing for mass incarceration that was laid out in the 1960s by the administrations of Presidents John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson. Both presidents were instrumental in gains made during the civil rights movement of the 1960s, but as Hinton so deftly reveals in her work, the underlying assumptions of both administrations regarding the root causes of poverty and civil unrest, particularly among young male African American citizens of the United States, led to the federally funded militarization of police forces country-wide and allowed the following, more conservative, administrations to astronomically increase the prison population in the United States. Throughout the book, she suggests that this was made possible by the reluctance throughout the 1960s of the Kennedy and Johnson administrations to allow communities of color to decide for themselves how to best alleviate poverty and unemployment, along with rising crime rates in the deindustrializing inner cities of the United States.

Hinton's description of the government's legislative response to the civil unrest and violence in many impoverished inner-city neighborhoods of color during the mid-1960s, which are best characterized by what took place in the Watts neighborhood of Los Angeles in August of 1965 (violence that broke out in response to accusations of police brutality, which resulted in 34 deaths), may be her best example showing how the shift from a war on poverty to a war on crime occurred. Up until the widespread civil unrest around the country in the mid-1960s, the organization that funded programs intended to deal with the poverty and crime being experienced in these communities was the Office of Economic Opportunity, which, as its name indicates, was concerned with increasing economic and employment opportunities. Less than 2 months after the violent unrest in Watts, Hinton shows us that these same anti-poverty programs were funded by the newly founded Office of Law Enforcement Assistance, which was created when Johnson signed the Law Enforcement Assistance Act of 1965 on September, 22 1965. Hinton makes the case that this shift in funding resulted in an absence of community involvement in anti-poverty programs and more of an emphasis on top-down approaches geared at so-

cial control as opposed to employment or education. Hinton tells us that this phenomenon was largely due to the fact that when communities of color were consulted on how best to address issues of poverty, unemployment, and crime, they almost always pointed to the policies and actions of the existing power structure as major sources of their plight, which induced fierce resistance to community-based strategies from many municipalities. Hinton argues that this resistance from local municipalities to community involvement and media-driven fears of a massive racial rebellion in the wake of civil unrest in the mid-1960s led to coercive instead of cooperative approaches to dealing with poverty, unemployment, and crime. Alas, Hinton shows us that this meant that the social programs previously staffed by social workers, public health officials, and others from the helping professions would slowly become staffed by local police forces nationwide. One of the major contributions that Hinton provides is noting that these increased opportunities for police surveillance in low-income communities of color would not have been available in the first place had the Kennedy and Johnson administrations of the 1960s based their policies on the belief that inner-city communities of color were capable of self-governance in the first place.

Hinton masterfully describes how this underlying distrust within both the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, best exemplified by a 1965 report distributed among the Johnson administration suggesting that, due to a long history of racial discrimination, African Americans were pathologically inclined toward poverty, resulted in the exclusion of community members in developing responses to poverty, unemployment, and crime. This exclusion gave ample opportunity for the use of more repressive law enforcement techniques moving forward. Hinton shows us that the 1970s are the origin of sting operations and stop-and-frisk tactics. Hinton notes that these tactics resulted from the Nixon and Ford administrations' attempts to produce law and order in the 1970s in response to the civil unrest during the civil rights movement of the 1960s but may have produced more crime and chaos than they prevented. Hinton also points out that these tactics wound up increasing the use and need for prisons. Hinton offers a unique perspective on how the sting operations she describes in the book are a major area of concern. In discussing a fencing operation known as Operation Sting set up by a partnership between the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF), and the Washington, DC, Police (DCPD) in 1975, Hinton notes that not only did this operation increase property crime in the area by offering a consis-

tent and well-paying place to dispose of stolen goods (over \$2.4 million in stolen goods were purchased with nearly \$70,000 of federal funds) but the increase in crime was almost solely perpetrated by and against low-income people of color. In fact, when it came to light that the government was using taxpayer money to pay for stolen goods, many residents were in an uproar. However, Hinton is quick to point out that they were mainly impoverished people of color and that their concerns were minimized. Hinton notes that the DCPD, the FBI, and the ATF justified their actions with the number of arrests (over 250 in one day) that they made but that it turned out that the majority of convictions were levied against unemployed black men aged 18–30 in an area where unemployment was over 40 percent.

Clearly this tactic was effective at producing arrests and convictions, but in what way, shape, or form was this helping to alleviate crime or poverty in inner-city communities of color across the United States? Hinton's answer is simply that it was not, and she also suggests that alleviating poverty and crime simply was no longer the goal of more conservative-minded administrations. During the 1970s, the Nixon and Ford administrations had moved from the feeling of doubt that communities of color were capable of self-governance that permeated both the Kennedy and Johnson administrations during the 1960s to what Hinton describes as policies that no longer aimed to reduce poverty and unemployment but aimed instead to punish people who were deemed inherently criminal. Hinton uses Nixon's heavy investment in the building of prisons in the 1970s and his 1971 declaration of a war on drugs, along with the ever increasing federal funding for the enhancement of the surveillance, tactical, and suppressive capabilities of local police forces throughout the 1970s during the Nixon, Ford, and Carter administrations, as evidence of this shift. She notes that this was followed by the ramping up of the war on drugs during the 1980s and 1990s, which provided many new opportunities for the arrest and incarceration of impoverished residents, largely of color, in America's inner cities. However, she dismisses the notion that the war on drugs, while admittedly instrumental, was the originator of mass incarceration in the United States.

After reading Hinton's book, it is almost comical to see police departments nationwide resisting the use of community panels that would help decide how communities should be policed and politicians clamoring for more law and order. However, it is not comical for the people living in communities that have borne the brunt of the wars on crime, drugs, and poverty, nor is it comical for the police who are told to keep order in these

communities. Hinton offers a very simple lesson in suggesting that the opportunities to involve communities of color in addressing issues of poverty, unemployment, and crime that were missed in the 1960s should not be missed today.

Our world can certainly seem a frightening place at times, but if Hinton's work tells us anything, it is that more repressive attempts at law and order, as opposed to addressing the economic strains leading toward civil unrest and crime, will likely only deliver more crime and unrest. Also, she makes it quite clear that we must learn from our past mistakes, face up to the bigotry within the criminal justice system, and give a meaningful role to community members when it comes to strategies of policing and alleviating poverty. Furthermore, as Hinton points out, finding ways to include all people in the legitimate economy would be a much more effective tool in stemming civil upheaval and crime in impoverished inner-city communities of color. This book is poignant and timely, and it offers a well thought-out account of not only the roots and rise of mass incarceration in the United States but also the ever-deteriorating relationship between police and low-income communities of color. All the while, Hinton does a masterful job of showing how both sides of the political spectrum contributed to the massive rise in incarceration.

Mark Plassmeyer
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Brief Notices

NEW AND UPCOMING TITLES OF INTEREST TO SOCIAL WORK AND SOCIAL WELFARE SCHOLARS

Battle for Bed-Stuy: The Long War on Poverty in New York City. By Michael Woodsworth. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016. Pp. 424. \$35.00 (cloth).

Down, Out, and Under Arrest: Policing and Everyday Life in Skid Row. By Forrest Stuart. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Pp. 352. \$27.50 (cloth).

Grassroots Youth Work: Policy, Passion, and Resistance in Practice. By Tania de St. Croix. Bristol, UK: Policy Press, 2016. Pp. 256. \$120.00 (cloth); \$39.95 (paper).

Hope in Hard Times: Norvelt and the Struggle for Community during the Great Depression. By Timothy Kelly, Margaret Power, and Michael Cary. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2016. Pp. 280. \$79.95 (cloth).

Hunger Pains: Life inside Foodbank Britain. By Kayleigh Garthwaite. Bristol, UK: Policy Press, 2016. Pp. 176. \$26.00 (paper).

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Out of Place: Social Exclusion and Mennonite Migrants in Canada. By Luann Good Gingrich. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016. Pp. 336. \$80.00 (cloth); \$32.95 (paper).

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Reimagining the Human Service Relationship. Edited by Jaber F. Gubrium, Tone Alm Andreassen, and Per Koren Solvang. New York: Columbia University Press, 2016. Pp. 368. \$65.00 (cloth).

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Why We Need Welfare: Collective Action for the Common Good. By Pete Alcock. Bristol, UK: Policy Press, 2016. Pp. 172. \$26.00 (paper).

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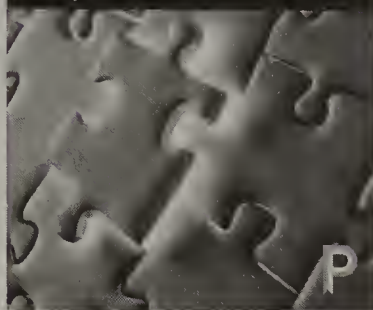
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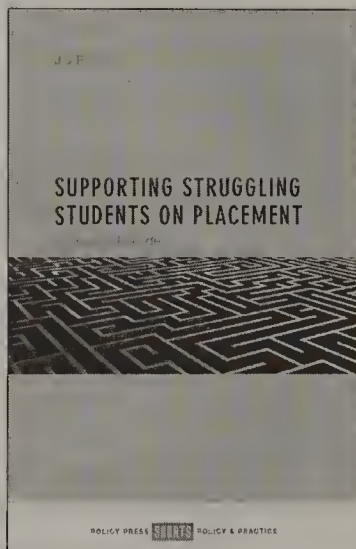
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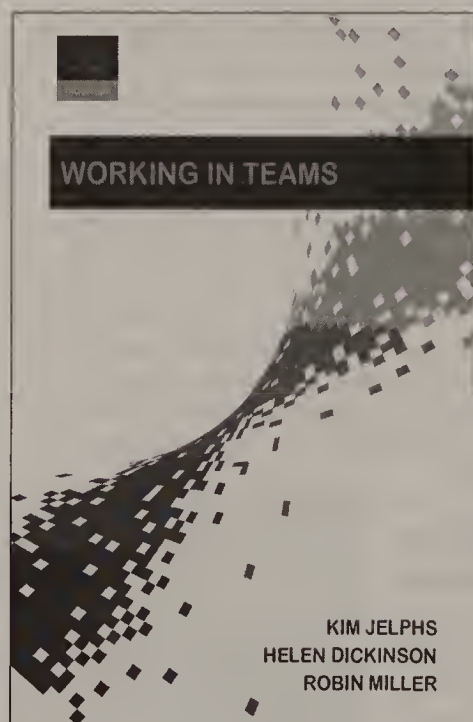
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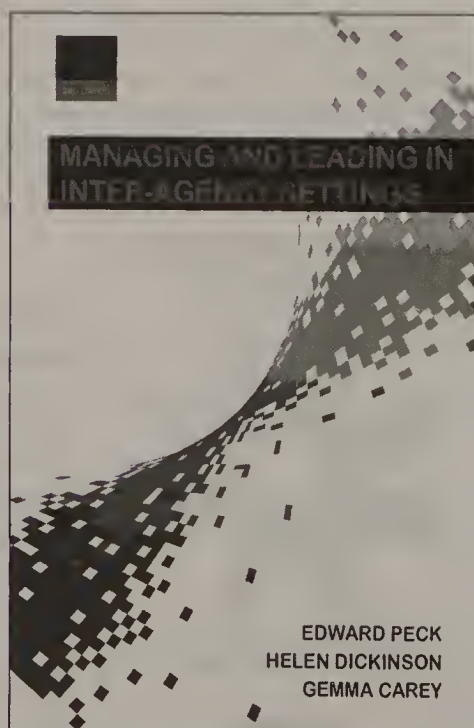
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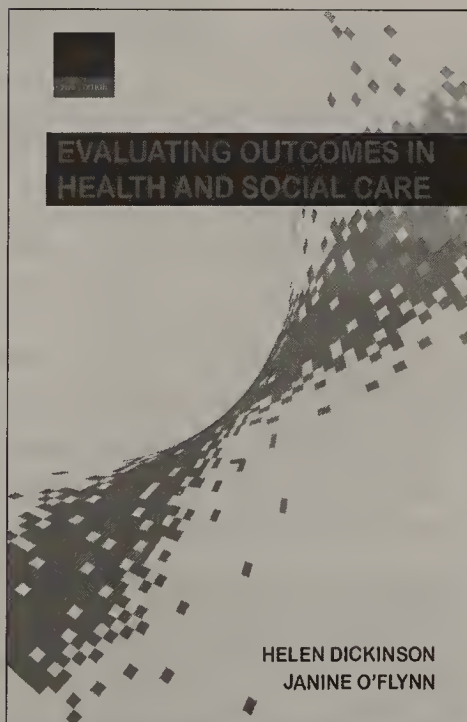
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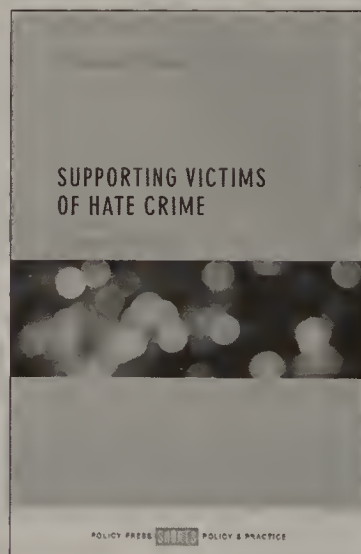
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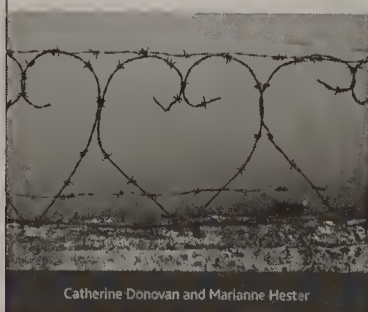
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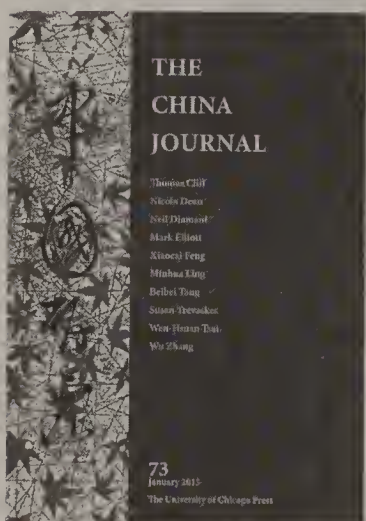
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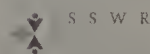
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